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MIKE SHAYNE



MYSTERY MAGAZINE

MAY, 1977
VOL. 40, NO. 5

NEW MIKE SHAYNE SHORT NOVÉL

THE VERDICT WAS MURDER

All Shayne wanted was to get out of town for a ball with Lucy—but Tim Rourke was beaten up and then the red-head promised Mary Shaughnessy to keep her son out of the toils of the law. And then, somehow, a shipment of hot heroin got into the act. . For a desperate while, it looked as if Shayne would be lucky to get out of town alive.

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MIKE SHAYNE MYSTERY MAGAZINE, Vol. 40, No. 5, May, 1977. Published monthly by Renown Publications, Inc., P.O. Box 69150, Los Angeles, Calif. 90069. Subscriptions, One Year (12 issues) \$9.00; Two Years (24 issues) \$18.00; Single 75¢. Second-class postage paid at Los Angeles, Cal., and at additional mailing offices. Places and characters in this magazine are wholly fictitious. © 1977 by Renown Publications, Inc. All rights reserved. Protection secured under the International and Pan-American copyright conventions. Printed in the United States of America. Postmaster—return P.O. Box 69150, Los Angeles, California 90069.

THE VERDICT WAS MURDER

by BRETT HALLIDAY

All Shayne wanted was to get away for a Montego Bay vacation with Lucy. Then Tim Rourke got beaten up and then young Rian Shaughnessy disappeared and then somebody sent the detective a deck of heroin—and then hell really began to detonate.



I

MIKE SHAYNE PAID HIS bar bill at The Beef House and glanced at his watch. It was five-thirty and in mid-January already dark outside in Miami's streets. He scowled. Tim

Rourke should have been here by five—it looked as if the Miami *Daily News* ace reporter wasn't coming.

Shayne shrugged as he headed for the door. Tim was probably hung up on a story. Shayne decided to give him a call in the morning, from the



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airport. Shayne and Lucy were leaving for Montego Bay on a two weeks vacation—a vacation, Mike felt, long overdue.

Customers came in, cursing the unseasonably cold weather, bellying up to the bar for liquid warmth. Shayne stepped out of the restaurant, pulling his coat collar up against the icy wind. Flecks of snow danced across the lighted store windows, a sight seldom if ever before seen in the Florida sunshine city.

The big redhead turned left into the parking lot where he had left his car. Small gritty flakes were bouncing off the blacktop, skittering across it like tiny bouncing white balls.

Snow—in Miami!

Well, he thought, it was better than what they were getting in Buffalo or Chicago. Mike considered this as he headed for his Buick. He ducked his head against the snow and projected himself into Montego Bay. Warm sun, blue water, soft breezes . . .

He was wrapped up in these pleasant thoughts and didn't notice the dark shape beside his convertible until he heard the glass break.

Shayne's head jerked up and he yelled, "Hey!" He broke into a run and saw the car thief whirl, a knife blade catching the street light, flickering ominously.

Shayne swerved aside, felt the sharp blade tear his coat pocket. He spun and chopped down hard with his big fist on the extended knife hand. The shadowy figure uttered a yelp of pain as the knife went skittering across the hard surface of the parking lot.

The redhead grabbed a fistful of shabby coat, yanked the squirming figure close. He was looking into a narrow, hard face, street-tough and gang-wise. The thief had a knitted cap pulled down over his ears. He couldn't have been more than sixteen years old.

He twisted in Shayne's grasp, a stream of gutter oaths spilling from his lips. Mike slammed him back against the side of the car, held him there. The window on the far side of the driver's seat was broken. The kid must have been after what was inside his glove compartment, or looking for a CB which was easy to fence since the CB craze had hit the country.

Goddammit, he thought, somebody's kid running wild!

The big redhead was not a social moralist, but he had a tough sense of justice. He had seen too many kids start out stealing from cars and winding up murderers.

"What were you looking for?" the redhead growled.

He twisted aside just in time as the kid tried to bring his knee up into the big redhead's crotch.

"Tough, eh?" Shayne snarled. "A gutter fighter?" He slammed the kid back against the car. "Well, a few hours inside the city jail will—"

Mike didn't see the kid's partner come from between two cars behind him. This one had a tire iron in his hands and he slipped just as he brought it down across the big redhead's head. The slip saved Shayne's life. The iron merely glanced off Mike's head instead of crushing it.

The detective staggered, lights flashing before his eyes. He fell against the side of the car and turned to see the two shadowy car thieves dart off across the parking lot. Anger whipped at him. He lunged after them, felt his legs buckle. He went down to his hands and knees, sucking in gulps of cold air to help him hang onto his slipping senses.

A man came out of the restaurant and moved toward him. He saw Shayne on the ground beside his Buick and bent over the big redhead, helped him to his feet.

The man chuckled. "Had a little too much grog—eh, buddy?"

Shayne sagged against the



car, nodded. "Yeah," he said thickly, "just a little too much."

"Better call yourself a cab," the man advised. "You're in no shape to drive."

"I'll do that," Shayne promised. He was in no mood to explain what had happened to a stranger.

"Hell of a night, isn't it?" the man said, glancing up at the stormy sky. "Snow in Miami! Good god, what in hell is the world coming to?"

The detective watched him walk away to a car parked at the far end of the lot, then turned to his Buick. He opened

the glove compartment, was relieved to find his .45 still there. He shoved it down inside his waistband, walked back into the restaurant. He was still groggy. His head ached. He felt cold and angry.

He slid onto a stool and the bartender, coming up, said, "Cold too much for you, Mr. Shayne?"

Shayne was in no mood for banter either. "Brandy," he growled. "Double!" He remembered he was supposed to meet Tim Rourke here, have dinner with him. It had been Tim's idea . . . something he wanted to talk over with the big redhead.

Dammit, he thought angrily, he could have been in Lucy's apartment, enjoying her company. If he wanted to growl about the weather, Lucy was a better companion to growl with.

He slid off his stool, went to the pay phone and plunked his dime into the slot.

Carl Dirksen, Miami *Daily News* city editor, answered. "Who? Tim Rourke? Oh—Mike Shayne. Guess you didn't know. Tim's in the hospital. Yeah, beat up pretty bad. Don't know all the details, Mike. He hasn't been able to talk yet."

Shayne hung up the receiver, stared at the wall for a moment. Tim Rourke, badly beaten? He went back to the bar,

downed the double brandy in a couple of quick gulps, put money on the bar and strode out.

II

IT WAS AN EIGHT mile drive to Memorial Hospital. The icy wind blew in through the broken window, chilling Mike's face while the heater warmed his feet. He passed a few stopped cars on the way, radiators steaming . . . clunkers mostly, which had never had to use anti-freeze and had now been caught by surprise.

The floor nurse at Memorial stared at the big redhead. "No visitors," she said firmly, "unless you're family."

"I am," Shayne said. The way he saw it, this was not really a lie. Tim didn't have any family in Miami and Mike was the closest friend he had there.

The floor nurse spotted the small trickle of blood which had congealed just below the redhead's hairline. She became concerned. "That looks like a bad cut. Maybe you should stop in at Emergency."

"Can't afford it," Shayne smiled. "My Blue Shield just ran out."

The floor nurse shrugged, a small smile on her face, as Mike went down the hall to Ward C.

Tim seemed to be asleep when the redhead looked in on him. The ace reporter lay in a semi-private room . . . the other bed was empty. Tim's head was bandaged, his lips seemed puffed, and more bandage had been wound tight around his ribs.

Shayne knew Tim had been working on a narcotics smuggling story. A dangerous assignment. He was lucky he had not been killed.

Shayne walked to his bedside, waited a moment, then said softly: "Tim?"

Rourke's eyes flickered open. He turned his head slightly, looked up at Shayne, managed a wry grin.

"Hi, Mike."

"Told you you needed a few more workouts at the gym," Shayne said. He dragged up a chair, sat down. "Nice and warm in here. It's one hell of a lot better than being outside tonight."

Tim said: "Sorry about tonight . . . standing you up at the joint."

The detective waved it off.

"What happened?"

Tim ran his tongue across his puffed lips. "Street gang," he said. "Down by the wharves. They jumped me."

Mike frowned. Why? Rourke never had any money on him to speak of. His old Ford clunker

wouldn't bring a dime in a hard-up used car lot.

"Went down there on a tip," Rourke went on. He hitched himself up on his pillow, grimaced as his cracked ribs hurt. "How about a cigaret, Mike? Damn night nurse's a teetotaler . . . took my pack away."

Shayne handed him a cigaret, lighted it for him. Rourke sucked in smoke gratefully.

"You ever read the attorney general's warning on the cigaret pack?" the redhead chided.

"Sure," Tim said. "Do you?" He shrugged. "I figure it's a fifty-fifty chance, and I've always been a sucker for that kind of odds."

"How come you got mixed up with a street gang?"

Rourke hesitated. "I was waiting in a doorway for my informant to show up. It was beginning to snow and I was cold as hell. *Christ!* Whoever heard of it snowing in Miami? There was a car parked down the street . . . an old Volkswagen."

Tim sucked in a lungful of smoke. "An old Chevvy came cruising by. They spotted the Volks, pulled up across the street. A bunch of kids piled out. I thought they were going to strip the car right there, but one of them cut a hole in the

window with a glass cutter and I saw they were going to hotwire the bug and drive it away..."

"And that's when you went barging in?" Shayne growled. He shook his head. "Thought you knew better."

"I do," Tim cut in, blushing a little. "But I told the police sergeant who questioned me I acted on impulse, thinking I could frighten them off." He butted out his cigaret in the ashtray on his night table. "I told him that," he said, looking up at the big redhead, "because I didn't want to tell him the truth."

Shayne plucked at his left earlobe. "What is the truth?"

"Mary Shaughnessy's kid was with them."

"Rian?"

Tim nodded. "I have him to thank for my not being worse off. But he knew I saw him, Mike."

Mike Shayne settled his big frame back into the chair. It had been a while since he had visited with Mary Shaughnessy. Not since St. Patrick's Day.

"He's running with a bad crowd," Rourke said. "Someone had better take him in hand, talk to him."

"Yeah. I guess Mary has her hands full." Shayne was silent, remembering Tom Shaugh-

nassy, a big, smiling Irishman who had worked his way up to sergeant in the Miami Police Force before being killed in the line of duty. He had stopped a car after it ran a red light and was shot by one of its occupants as he approached, citation book in hand.

Violence, senseless violence. It was getting out of hand all over the country. Miami and Miami Beach were no worse than other cities, better than some. But Chief Gentry was having his hands full, and so was Peter Painter, across the Bay in Miami Beach.

"I'm worried about the kid," Tim said. "He's headed for trouble."

"He's already in trouble," Shayne growled.

The night nurse came in, saw the cigaret in Mike's hand, frowned icy disapproval.

The redhead decided it was time to leave. He stood up, said, "I'll talk to him, Tim."

III

MARY SHAUGHNESSY LIVED in an older section of Miami; a small pink-and-white stucco house with flower beds around it and a bird bath in the small yard. It had been in a quiet neighborhood once, before the urban sprawl had exploded around it. Now, like the rest of

the area, it wore a tired, shabby look.

Mary's father had come from Ireland and she still retained a hint of the Irish brogue. Like her husband Tom, who had come down from Boston, she had felt close to Jack Kennedy and, when he was assassinated, had taken it hard. She had not voted since.

She was wearing a sweater this morning when Mike Shayne came in. She had been a pretty girl, robust and red cheeked, with the smiling Irish eyes poets have written about. She was thinner now, the bloom gone, and the gray-green eyes had not smiled in a long time.

"Tis a pleasure, Mike," she greeted, waving him to a kitchen chair. "We don't see enough of you these days."

Mike felt a twinge of conscience. "I've been busy," he said.

"Rounding up them thieves for the insurance company," Mary said, nodding. "Was it one million dollars they took in diamonds and necklaces?" She looked wistful. "My Tom worked eighteen years for the Force and all he ever managed to nail were punks and petty gamblers and small-time car thieves."

She turned away. Mary looked tired, worried. Shayne

sensed she was talking to keep herself from tears.

"I'd offer you coffee," she said, "but, at four dollars a pound . . ." She sighed. "Will a spot of tea do?"

Shayne had already had his morning coffee. He nodded. "Tea will be fine, Mary."

She set a kettle on the gas stove. "I have a bottle of brandy tucked away," she confessed, reaching up into a cupboard, "for old friends . . ."

She set a cup and the bottle down on the kitchen table and slipped into a chair across from the big redhead.

"What brings you to see an old widow?" she asked.

The redhead poured himself a small shot of brandy. It was cheap drugstore brandy, but he knew it was all Mary could afford.

"Where's Rian?"

He saw what the trouble was in her face, what had probably kept her sleepless through the night. She got up without answering and went to the stove where the water was beginning to boil.

"Mary," Shayne repeated gently, "where is he?"

"I don't know," the woman answered and he saw her shoulders droop. "He didn't come home last night. It's been more than twenty-four hours."

She turned then, facing the

detective. "He's in trouble, isn't he?"

Shayne nodded.

"He's taken to staying out late," she said, lips trembling. "Comes and goes as he pleases. And him only a boy of sixteen!" She brought a corner of her apron up to wipe at her eyes. "I can't talk to him, Mike. Mind you, he doesn't sass me—he just walks away. Makes it hard for me to manage with the smaller children—with Kelly and Shawn."

The redhead waited.

"Yesterday the school called. Rian hasn't been to class in almost a week."

He had seen it happen before. It was not an unusual story. Mary was living on a small pension and trying to make ends meet by working part time in a local laundromat.

"What's he done, Mike?"

She came back to the table, sat down, her face wan and troubled. "That's why you're here, isn't it? Because of Rian?"

The tea kettle began to whistle. Shayne said, "I'll get it." He went to the stove, dropped tea bags into the two cups, poured. "He tried to steal a car," he added. "Last night. Tim Rourke saw him."

Mary's eyes closed as she uttered a silent prayer.

"He's running with a bad crowd," the detective added.

"How long has he been doing this?"

She shook her head. "He's changed—since Tom was killed. Started then, I think. He was always a headstrong boy, but Tom kept him in line." She bit her lip. "'Tis a bad world out there, Mike—bad for a boy without a father to grow up in. Dirty movies, dirty pictures. No respect for the law anymore, for God, for anything." She buried her face in her hands. "Sometimes I feel like a stranger in a land I don't know any more."

Shayne understood. Mary's world *was* changing. He hoped some day it would be for the better.

She raised her head, her blue eyes wet with crying. "I tried to bring Rian up right," she said. "God-fearing, law-abiding. Tom would turn over in his grave if he knew."

Shayne finished his tea, said: "I'll find him, Mary." He stood up, laid a hand gently on her shoulder. "I'll talk to Rian, before he gets into any more trouble."

She nodded, her lips trembling. "He needs a strong hand, Mike . . . but he's a good boy underneath that wild shell he's wearing."

Lucy looked up from her desk as Mike strode into the office. "Well, well," she said, "keeping

banker's hours these days, Michael?"

He scowled blankly at her.

She pointed to the digital clock on her desk. "It's half-past ten. And we're due at the airport at noon."

Shayne now noticed that her bag was packed and set close to the water cooler.

"Cancel my ticket to Montego Bay," he said. "I have to stay around a while . . ." He rubbed the palms of his hands together. "Damn! What are you trying to do—freeze me?"

"Being a good citizen and turning the thermostat down," she said sweetly, "until this freeze is over."

She settled back in her chair, sensing trouble in the big redhead. "What is it, Michael?"

He came back, dropped the morning newspaper in front of her. "Mary Shaughnessy's boy, Rian. He's in trouble."

Lucy stared at the secondary front page story Shayne had circled in blue felt pen. It was slugged:

RASH OF OLD VOLKSWAGON CAR THEFTS BAFFLE POLICE

"Get me Tim Rourke on the phone," Shayne said. Then, as Lucy started to dial the *Miami Daily News*, "He's in Memorial Hospital, C Ward."

Lucy stared at him.



"Tim's all right," the big redhead reassured her. "Got into a fight last night."

Lucy dialed, waited until she was switched to Tim's room, scolded him lightly: "Tim? What are you doing in a hospital?"

"Keeping warm." Tim chuckled.

Shayne picked up the extension. "Tim—Mike. Can you talk?"

"Sure. What is it, Mike?"

"What do you know about these old Volkswagons being ripped off?"

There was a pause at Tim's end of the line. "It was going to be my next assignment. There was a story in the Los Angeles *Times* a few years ago. A lot of old beetles were being ripped off the city streets. Police there finally ran it down to a gang selling the cars to a fence out in the desert somewhere. Used an old garage as a front, tore down the bugs, used the engines and frames to build fast-selling dune buggies."

"Think there's a connection?" Mike Shayne asked.

"Could be."

"You recognize anyone else in that gang last night?"

Tim whistled softly. "I wouldn't swear to it in court, Mike. It was dark. Only one I really recognized was Rian Shaughnessy. But one of them,

the leader, could have been Pedro Sanchez."

"The fighter?"

"Yeah. Same build, quick hands. He got to me first."

"You tell that to the police?"

"No."

"Gentry won't like that," Shayne growled.

"I couldn't prove anything," Tim said. "I could be wrong." Then, "You talk to Mary?"

"Yeah."

"Talk to Rian?"

"He wasn't home." The big redhead plucked at his left earlobe. "He knew you saw him. He hasn't been home all night."

Lucy was listening to all this, tapping her pencil on her desk nervously. She broke in, "Is Mary's boy mixed up in this?"

Shayne nodded. "I'll drop in at Sandoval's Gym," he told Rourke. It was a place to start. That's where young Pedro Sanchez hung out, when he wasn't running the streets."

"Mike," Tim said, his voice serious, "take care."

The redhead grinned. "You're telling me!"

He hung up, rubbed the tip of his nose, thinking over his next moves.

"Go home," he told Lucy. "Too damn cold to work, anyhow."

Lucy said, "In case you haven't noticed, I'm wearing a

woolen sweater. And snuggies."

Mike looked at her. "Snuggies?"

She colored slightly. "If you don't know, I won't tell you."

Shayne walked to the window, looked outside. The sky was still overcast and people were shivering in the streets. He wondered how the tourists in Miami Beach felt, paying as much as two hundred bucks a day and freezing. They could have stayed at home for this kind of weather.

"My car's in the garage, getting a window installed," he told Lucy. "Where's yours?"

"Parked where it always is."

She took her keys from her bag, handed them to him. "Take a cab when you leave," Mike said. "Charge it to me. I've got some running around to do."

He was at the door when Lucy called him back. "Michael—I almost forgot. This came for you this morning. UPS brought it in."

Shayne walked back to her desk as Lucy took a small package from a drawer, set it down before him.

It was wrapped in plain brown paper, addressed to him. No return address—But a name had been block-lettered in the upper left hand corner—GLADYS.

Lucy said primly, "Some old girlfriend, Michael?"

Shayne didn't answer her. He tore the wrapping from the small box, opened it. A small cloth packet lay inside. He knew what it was before he loosened the draw string, wet the tip of his forefinger, touched it to the white powder inside, tasted it.

Heroin!

Street value, probably fifty thousand dollars!

IV

THE BIG REDHEAD STARED at the small packet, his fist tightening around it. It could be a frame and he turned to the door, half expecting someone from Narcotics to come bursting in. He had his share of enemies in the department as well as friends.

"What is it?" Lucy asked. There was alarm in her eyes.

"Heroin," he replied.

"My God!" Lucy exclaimed. "Who'd send that to you?"

"Someone named Gladys," Shayne replied. The name was familiar, scratching at the back of his head.

"You'd better call Chief Gentry," Lucy advised.

"Later." He had a hunch that the packet might have been sent to him for another reason. Someone frightened . . . someone who knew him, wanted to tell him something.

He put the packet back in the small box. "Put it in the safe," he told Lucy. "I'll take care of it later."

He knew it was a dangerous thing to do. He was a private detective, successful in the Miami area—but he had stepped on a lot of toes in his time. There were people in the city who would love to hang a narcotics charge on him. Maybe he *should* call Gentry, explain it to him. It was the wise thing to do. But the redhead often played hunches, and he had a strong one this time.

"Go home," he told Lucy. "Be a good citizen, turn the thermostat way down and stay out of the office until I call you."

"Where are you going?"

"To Sandoval's gym on Eighth street." He smiled crookedly. "I need some exercise."

Sandoval's gymnasium was down in the Cuban area, a hole-in-the-wall, badly lighted and badly ventilated. The smell of stale sweat, liniment and old hopes clung to the walls. A battered has-been was working out at the heavy bag, snuffing loudly, thumbing the side of his battered nose with a gloved hand as he slammed punches into the big canvas bag.

Two young fighters were sparring in the center of the

ring. A fleshy, heavy-faced man with a fat cigar in his mouth watched them. From time to time a thin, nervous, balding man with a towel slung across his shoulder made comments to the fleshy man, pointing to one of the fighters.

Mike knew them both. The fleshy man was Nick Sawyer, rumored to have a tie in with a New York syndicate, who handled and promoted fighters. Sawyer wore expensive clothes, drove a Cadillac, entertained a lot of flashy women.

The thin man was a fight handler named Slats, a part-time runner for bookies, a some-time pimp. He was trying to impress Sawyer with one of the fighters, but Sawyer was shaking his head, scowling, as the detective approached them.

The handler saw him first. He stopped talking, stepped back, a nervous hostility showing.

Sawyer turned, blew smoke at the redhead. "Hi, shamus. What you doing down this end of town?"

Slats snickered, taking his cue from the bigger man. "Look like you need a little workout, Shayne. Getting a mite soft around the middle, aintcha?"

Mike ignored him. He pointed a finger at one of the fighters in the ring.

"I want to talk to Pedro."

Slats glanced quickly at Nick. "What for?" Nick was ungracious about it.

"You can listen in," Shayne told him.

Nick looked at the handler, shrugged. Slats stepped close to the ring, yelled, "Hey, Flash—come here! There's a shamus wants to talk to you."

A fighter in gaudy orange and black trunks disengaged himself from his sparring partner, came over to the ropes, glanced down at Shayne, scowled. He was almost as tall as the redhead, well built, big for an eighteen year old. He was fast, quick and punched hard. But he was a bleeder. Already white scar tissue was building up over his eyes.

Nick said, "You been up to something you shouldn't be doing, kid?" There was menace in his voice.

Pedro flinched, said, "Who is he?"

"Mike Shayne," Nick said. "Hotshot private eye."

Pedro licked his lips. "Don't know him." He started to dance a little, keeping loose, tapping his gloved hands together.

"Where's Rian Shaughnessy?" Mike's question was blunt.

Pedro Sanchez blinked. "Who?"

Mike's temper was on short fuse this morning. "He was with you last night. Down

around the wharves, helping you steal a car."

Pedro caught Nick's scowling look, shook his head. "You got it wrong, shamus. I don't know nobody named Rian. And I don't go around stealing cars."

The redhead stepped up on the ring apron and vaulted over the ropes. "He was with you last night," Mike repeated. "And he didn't go home. Where's he hiding out?"

Pedro danced back, squared off. He was young, confident. He wasn't afraid of Shayne.

"You go to hell!" he said. "I don't talk to you, shamus!"

Nick stepped close to ringside. "Kid, back off!"

Pedro ignored him.

"You want trouble, mister—you got it!" He moved in quickly, stabbed a left into Shayne's face, jerking his head back. He danced back, set himself for a right-hand shot at the redhead's chin.

Slats yelled, "Watch out for your hands, you fool! Not his head."

Pedro moved in. He had quick hands, as Tim had said. But Mike was remembering the beating the *Miami Daily News* reporter had taken last night. He had to end it fast. This kid was twenty years younger.

Shayne took a glancing blow off the side of his face, tucked his chin under his right shoul-

V

der and walked in on Pedro, sinking a rock hard fist into the kid's stomach. It hurt. Pedro's mouth snapped open, his mouthpiece showing. For a split second he was dead on his feet, his hands down. Shayne's right crossed to the side of his jaw.

Pedro went down on his back. He tried to turn over, get up. He looked at Shayne through glazed, shocked eyes. Then his arms buckled and he fell on his face, lay still.

Shayne rubbed his bruised knuckles as he climbed back over the ropes. "He'll never make it to the big time," he told Slats. "The kid's a sucker for a right cross."

Nick was rolling his cigar around between thick lips. "Pretty good, shamus."

The detective gave him a cold glance as he walked away from the platform.

Slats was in the ring, working over Pedro. A whiff of ammonia brought him to.

Nick pointed a finger at him. "So you've been moonlighting, stealing cars?" Nick's eyes were like hard gray marbles. "You know the rules, kid. No trouble with the law."

Pedro licked his lips, fear showing. "A lie," he said thickly. "I didn't—"

Nick turned to Slats. "Get him the hell out of here! He's through!"

SHAYNE HAD HAMBURGER in a coffee shop and put in a call to Mary Shaughnessy. She was just on her way to work—he caught her as she was leaving.

"No," she answered, her voice sounding tearful, "Rian hasn't come home. Mike, I'm afraid he might be hurt."

The big redhead reassured her as well as he could and hung up. He went back to the counter, finished his coffee. A sign behind the counter said, NO REFILLS ON COFFEE. That at thirty cents a cup! He thought wryly.

Shayne drove Lucky's car back to his apartment, changed his shirt and coat, slipping a sleeveless blue sweater underneath. The memory that had been eluding him all morning finally came through.

He sat down on the edge of the bed, picked up the phone and put a call through to police headquarters, where the desk sergeant answered. Shayne asked to speak to Lieutenant MacDougal in Narcotics.

MacDougal's voice came on the wire. He sounded tired. "Yeah—who is it?"

"Shayne."

"Oh!" There was a long pause at the other end of the line and Shayne sensed an uncomfortable reaction from

the narco officer. Then, "Yeah, Mike—what's up?"

"You tell me," Shayne said.

Mac's voice sounded short. "Shayne, I've got work to do. I don't have time to play twenty questions."

"A packet of uncut heroin," Mike cut in. "I got it this morning. Code name, Gladys."

He heard Mac draw a sharp breath at the other end of the line. "*Jesus!*" Then Mac's voice lowered to a whisper. "Shayne I'll talk to you later."

"When?"

There was a pause. "Tonight. Let's say . . . eight-thirty?"

"Where?"

"Not here. Not at home, either." MacDougal was thinking. "I'm on a case, Shayne—working with the Feds. How about the downtown warehouse area. End of Front Street?"

"I'll be there," Shayne said.

He hung up, went into his kitchen, poured himself a shot of Martell, sat down to think. He had a \$50,000 packet of heroin in his safe. It was lying there, like dynamite, ready to go off.

He knew Jim MacDougal pretty well. He had worked with him a couple of times. Married to a nice girl named Julie, an old school friend of Lucy's. They used to make it a foursome, getting together for



dinner, a swing on the town. But they hadn't seen much of each other lately. Mac had made lieutenant and transferred to the Narcotics Division and Julie had left Miami. Gone to see her mother in Philadelphia, MacDougal had said. But she had been gone a month now.

Shayne knew MacDougal was working on the drug traffic in Miami. The area was being flooded with hard stuff—heroin and cocaine. It was coming in from Mexico or Cuba and getting through to distributors and pushers. There were

rumors some highly placed political figures were behind it.

He remembered that Mac had used the code name Gladys in the old days. But if Mac had sent him the packet of heroin, why? Why not just call him? He had sounded surprised over the phone, shaken.

The redhead shook his head as he finished the brandy, went back to the phone. He'd find out why tonight. In the meantime, he had promised Mary he'd find Rian.

He called his garage, was told his car was ready. He drove Lucy's car to the repair shop, gave one of the boys five dollars to deliver it to her apartment and got into the Buick.

It was two-thirty when he parked it in front of the high school Rian attended and went into the administration office.

The girl he talked to had a long thin nose and dark glasses, but had nice eyes. "I'll have to talk to the principal," she said. She knocked on a door, went inside.

A moment later, a tall, rangy man who looked like a one-time football player came out. "Mr. Shayne? I'm Reggie Warner." He held out a hand. "Come inside, please."

The girl went back to her desk in the outer office as Mike followed the principal inside.

Warner waved him to a chair.

"I understand you wanted to have a talk with some of Rian Shaughnessy's classmates," the principal said. "I'd like to know what you want first."

Shayne told him he wanted to find out if anyone in the class knew the whereabouts of Rian.

Warner settled himself behind the desk, frowned. "I'd like to know, too. He hasn't been attending classes regularly. I talked to his mother." He leaned back, sighed. "This is an inner city school, Mr. Shayne, as you must be aware. Most of the students are from poor families—Cubans, Puerto Ricans. Some have little or no parental guidance."

"Like Pedro Sanchez?"

Warner nodded. "Yes. Pedro dropped out of school a year ago. His teachers, if I may be honest, were somewhat relieved. He was unruly and physically violent. Somewhat of a ringleader to the bad element we have here. Even after he dropped out, he would hang around, making trouble. I had the police finally warn him off."

"Rian knew him then?"

"I'm sure he did." Warner touched a button, spoke into his intercom. "Peggy, show Mr. Shayne to Rian's classroom. Tell Miss Tennyson he has my permission to talk to the class."

The girl with the nice eyes led Shayne down a hallway and into a classroom where a young, tawny-haired teacher was trying to explain the genealogy of mammals in evolutionary terms to a bored and disinterested class.

It was obvious she did not welcome the interruption. She stood by her wall chart, pointer in hand, and nodded primly. "Please make it short, Mr. Shayne."

The detective faced the students sprawled in their seats. It was an old-fashioned classroom, with hard oak desk chairs facing the front. They were not the "sweat hogs" of the *Welcome Back, Kotter* television show, but they were not far from it. The girls looked much older than the boys, wiser... one or two looked pregnant.

Shayne said he was looking for Rian Shaughnessy.

They stared back at him as though they couldn't care less. Mike shoved his hands deep into his pants pockets.

"Look," he said, making his voice sound urgent. "I'm from the medical center. We need to find Rian fast."

A flicker of interest showed in some of the eyes. A girl in the front row said: "Why? Has he got the clap?"

It got a laugh from the others.

"Any of you know what psycho-pittoriasis is?"

Behind him, Miss Tennyson frowned.

"It's a rare disease," Shayne went on. "Found in most tropical birds, macaws mainly. To people, it's fatal—unless it's caught and treated in time . . ."

"Mr. Shayne!" the young teacher protested.

He waved her off.

"It's a communicable disease," he said. "That's why we have to find Rian as quickly as possible."

There was a stir in the classroom now. None of them knew what psycho-pittoriasis was, but it sounded bad.

"Some of you must know where he hangs out," Shayne said.

A gangly, pimply-faced boy in back said, "Yeah—I saw Rian this morning."

"Where?"

The student hesitated. "Joe's Do-Nut Shop. He was having a dunker."

"Who was with him? Pedro Sanchez?"

"No. Sanchez hangs out at Jake's Pool and Bar, on Tenth Street when he's not at the gym."

Shayne made an O with his fingers. "Thanks, fellers." Miss Tennyson followed him into the hallway.

"Mr. Shayne," she said angrily, "there's no such disease as psycho-pittoriasis."

He smiled. "There isn't?"

Her lips tightened. "You lied to them!"

He nodded.

"That's unethical. How can you expect young people to believe in values when people like you—"

The redhead cut her off. "What would have happened if I had just asked them about Rian?"

She shook her head. "That's not the point!"

"Perhaps not," Shayne responded. "It's true Rian isn't sick as far as I know. But he's in trouble, and it could be fatal. I have to find him before it happens."

VI

JOE'S DO-NUT SHOP was on the corner, a block from the high school. Shayne talked to the man behind the counter. The man remembered Rian. "Sure," he said, "came in this morning. 'Round ten." He blew his nose into a tissue. "Looked scared, cold and kinda mussed up, like he'd slept with his clothes on. Bought doughnuts and coffee for him and his girl."

"Girl?"

"Yeah—a blonde, cheerleader type—wearing a sweater with the high school letter on it." He leered. "Couldn't help noticing. She had the biggest—"

Shayne cut him off. "Get her name?"

"He called her Carol."

Shayne put a dollar on the

counter and left. The sun had broken through the overcast, but there was still an Arctic bite to the air.

He was going nowhere with Rian and it irritated him. The boy could be getting deeper into trouble every passing hour.

He got behind the wheel of the Buick, checked his holster gun. He'd look up Carol later.

Jake's Pool & Bar was a shabby place not too far from Sandoval's gym. Nude girl dancers had pranced on the short runway until the police closed it down. Now hustlers, drifters and idlers hung out there. Small-time prostitutes, past their prime, checked in occasionally, down on their luck and willing to cut their price.

The big, paunchy man who ran the place eyed Shayne with suspicion. He was behind the small bar, his sleeves rolled up, brawny arms hairy, turning white. His name was Rufus. Jake had sold out long ago, but Rufus had seen no need to change the sign over the door.

His wife, a reformed alcoholic wearing a flaming red wig presided over the cash register. She smelled as bad as the stale beer spilled behind the car.

Shayne faced Rufus and said he was looking for a high school kid named Rian.

The paunchy man shook his head. "Sorry," he said. "No kids

in here." He pointed to the front door. "You read the sign out there. Nobody under twenty-one allowed in here."

Shayne looked around. Some customers were using the pool tables. Others were watching a sleazy porno film on a closed circuit TV set, beer glasses in hand.

"What's back there?" Shayne asked, pointing to a back door.

"Nothing," Rufus said.

"I'll check it out anyway," Shayne said, taking out his wallet, flipping it open, closing it. "Orders."

Rufus came around the bar, blocking the redhead off. "You're hearing must be bad, mister. I said there's no high school kids in here."

Shayne shoved him out of the way, opened the back door. He looked down a short hallway flanked by two closed doors and one at the far end with an EXIT sign over it. The area stank of everything, including marijuana.

He flung open the nearest door. A man and a woman sat up in an iron-framed bed, the woman's dyed hair straggly, coming down over her eyes. She brushed it back, stared at Shayne. "What in hell is this?" she rasped. She was partly undressed, her makeup laid on with a trowel. There was a half-filled bottle of whiskey on the bedside table.

Shayne heard the back door

open and shut as he backed out of the room. He ran down the corridor, yanked the exit door open, looked across a littered alley. The area behind Jake's was like a rabbit warren . . . no way he'd find whoever had ducked out there.

Shayne went back inside. It could have been Rian—it could have been anyone. The door across from the one he had opened was ajar . . . he looked inside. There was a bed there, a table with glasses on it, cigarette smoke still hanging in the air.

He turned as Rufus loomed up, a beer-bung mallet in his hand. "Goddammit, mister," the paunchy man snarled. "I told you—"

Shayne brushed his coat back, showed him the gun in his shoulder holster. "Detective," he said. "Narco Division."

The bar owner stopped, lowered his mallet. "Jesus!" he said, breathing harshly. "This a bust?"

Shayne shrugged. "not this time. Unless . . ." He let it hang in front of Rufus, the unspoken threat.

"All right, all right," Rufus conceded. "The kid was here last night. Slept in that back room. Sanchez brought him in."

"Was he in there now?"

Rufus shook his head. "Haven't seen him since he left this morning. Look, I don't ask questions. They pay me for the pad." He backed off as Shayne came to-

ward him, his eyes narrowing. "Hey—how come I didn't get word about you? I pay up every month."

"Oversight, probably."

He walked out into the street, glad to breathe the cold air. It was getting dark. He glanced at his watch, remembering he had a meeting with MacDougal. He was hungry again. Maybe it was the cold air. But he didn't feel like eating out. Eggs and coffee and brandy would do, and he had the makings at home.

He drove back to his apartment, walked inside to hear the phone ringing. It was Lucy.

"Where have you been?" Her voice sounded troubled.

"Around," he said.

"I thought you were out looking for Rian."

"I am," he said.

Lucy said, "I just got a call from his mother. She's been trying to find you and she sounded upset."

"I'll call her," Mike said.

He hung up, dialed. Mary Shaughnessy answered almost immediately. "Mike—Mike—Rian came home."

"Good," Shayne cut in. "Keep him there. I'll be right over."

"No, Mike, he isn't here. He came back this afternoon, while I was away, at the laundromat. One of the neighbors saw him. He didn't stay long."

The detective frowned. "Did he

leave you a note—anything?"

"He took something from the refrigerator, drank some milk, changed his jacket." Shayne could hear her beginning to cry. "But that ain't all, Mike. He took his father's gun—the reserve pistol Tom bought and kept in the closet . . ."

She was crying when Mike Shayne hung up.

VII

THE SKY WAS OVERCAST again when Shayne drove the Buick down Front street. The warehouse district was dark, an occasional street light casting a lonely splash of light.

He pulled up alongside the curb and waited. There was a pickup truck parked down the street, close to a lunchroom still open although most of the business establishments in the area were closed. No sign of Mac.

Shayne glanced at his watch. He was a couple of minutes early. He could see a section of the causeway across Biscayne Bay, and the lights of the high-rise hotels in Miami Beach. The contrast was sharp—the affluence of Miami Beach against this waterfront area of dingy shops, old warehouses, shabby hotels condemned but still lived in.

The minutes ticked by.

Shayne grew impatient. He glanced at his watch again. Eight-forty. He opened the door, stepped outside. The cold wind made him wince. Hell, he'd never get used to cold in Miami. . . .

The lunchroom windows across the street were steamed over, hiding what was inside. A man stepped out, paused in the doorway. He was shabbily dressed, an old peacoat unbuttoned. It looked like MacDougal, but Mike Shayne couldn't be sure.

The man lighted a cigaret, coughed, went back inside the lunchroom.

The detective started across the street. Vice officers and narco men often dressed the part these days, and the man in the peacoat could have been Mac.

He was coming up alongside the parked truck when he felt it, the strangeness of it. There was no other car in sight on the dark street. No one had come out of the lunch-room. But the pickup truck's motor was running, idling.

He heard the window roll down and spun away, going into a rolling dive behind the truck. A shotgun blasted. He glimpsed a thin hard face in the momentary shotgun flare, felt a burning numbness in his upper left arm. Then he was

rolling behind the truck, toward the curb.

The shotgun blasted again, pellets ripping into the old macadam. Then the engine roared as the truck pulled away with tires squealing.

Shayne was on his knees. He fired a couple of shots but the truck turned a corner and disappeared.

He stood up, slid his gun back into his shoulder holster. It had been close. He felt his arm, his fingers making contact with something sticky. He was bleeding, but not too badly.

He turned to the lunchroom. No one had come out to see what had happened. It was that kind of a neighborhood.

He opened the door, went inside, feeling a steamy heat envelop him. There was a woman in a booth with a truck driver. She looked startled, afraid. The others were longshoremen, tough, hard-eyed. A beefy man with an apron around his middle lounged behind the cash register.

"Who owns that pickup?" Shayne asked.

No one answered. The man with the greasy apron said: "What pickup?"

"The one that was parked out front."

The beefy man shrugged. "Ain't seen no pickup." He turned to the others. "You fel-

lers see a pickup out there?"
Nobody had.

"There was a feller who came out a few minutes ago," Shayne said, holding his temper. "Wore a peacoat, had a bad cough. He ducked back inside here. Where did he go?"

Men stared at him, faces closed.

Shayne walked down the length of the lunchroom. There was a door in the kitchen leading to an alley. He came back, eyed the man with the apron.

"You hear the shots?"

The man was chewing on a wood match. "Heard a car backfire," he said. "No gunshots."

Shayne eased his gun out of its holster, pointed the muzzle loosely at the counterman. His left arm was beginning to burn. "You see this gun?" the redhead asked grimly.

The counterman tensed, the color in his eyes thinning. "I told you, mister," he said steadfastly, "I didn't see no pickup, nobody in a peacoat, and I didn't hear no shots."

Mike Shayne let his gaze range over the closed faces of the lunchroom customers. The way to stay alive in this neighborhood was to see nothing, keep one's mouth shut. If MacDougal had been in here, the redhead wouldn't get anyone to admit it. Nor would he

find out who the man in the pickup truck was.

He shrugged, slipped the gun back into his shoulder holster.

The counterman relaxed. "Hell of a night, ain't it?" he said. His tone was friendly. "Cup of coffee, feller. It's on the house."

"Some other time," Shayne said.

He went outside into the chill night air and walked slowly back to his car. He was pretty sure it was Mac he had seen in the doorway. Had Mac set him up? They were long-time friends. Why should Mac want him killed? He could find no answer to that—none that satisfied him.

He drove back to his apartment, took the elevator upstairs. He had thought of going over to Lucy's place, have her look after the wound in his arm, but decided not to bother her. She might get hysterical over it and Shayne did not feel up to coping with that tonight.

He took off his coat and sweater and eased out of his shirt. Three pellets had ripped through the fleshy part of his upper arm. The bleeding had been slight and already crusting. He put some antibiotic salve over the wounds, wound a small bandage around his arm and went to bed.

VIII

THE PHONE AWAKENED HIM. Shayne rolled over in bed, groped for it on the night stand. It was barely light outside. His head ached and his arm burned. He had been dreaming of a sunlight beach, a tall drink in his hand, a bevy of skimpily clad girls romping in the surf. He woke to a cold room and shivered slightly as he growled, "Mike Shayne," into the mouthpiece.

Chief Gentry's voice was blunt. "Mike, I want you at the city morgue. Right away!"

Shayne frowned. "Why?"

"Tell you when you get here."

Shayne rolled out of bed, ran his fingers through his hair. What in hell was Gentry doing at the city morgue? Usually he didn't get to headquarters until nine.

He showered, shaved. He had some instant coffee in a jar—he boiled some water, enough for a large mug, stirred a heaping tablespoon of coffee crystals into it, added a generous slug of brandy and drank it while he dressed.

Gentry looked displeased when the redhead finally walked into the morgue's cooling room. He was standing with one of his district detectives, a tall, quiet-faced man named Frank Lessiter, alongside a

sheet-covered body on a marble slab table.

He said: "You took your time getting here, Mike." His tone was short but not unfriendly. He nodded at the morgue attendant, who lifted a corner of the sheet for Shayne to see the body under it.

Shayne stared down at the face of Pedro Sanchez.

"You know him?"

The big redhead nodded. "Saw him yesterday. Sandoval's gym."

Lessiter said: "Patrol car officer found him in an alley behind Jake's Bar and Pool."

"I know the place."

"Shot in the back of the head, gangland style. Coroner says a thirty-eight. We didn't find the gun."

Shayne laid a hard glance on Gentry. "Why me?"

"We got a tip this morning. You went to Sandoval's gym yesterday looking for Sanchez. I was told you threatened him."

Shayne's anger simmered. "I have a permit for a forty-five. You know that, Will. If you want a look at it—"

"Hold it, Mike!" Gentry snapped. "I said we got a call. I never said you killed him. I want to know why you went to that gym, why you worked Sanchez over."

Shayne drew in a deep breath. It would have come to

this anyway. "I was looking for Mary Shaughnessy's kid, Rian."

Gentry knew the Shaughnessys. So did Lessiter.

"Down in that slumhole?"

Mike nodded. He told Gentry what Tim Rourke had told him.

Lessiter remained silent. But Gentry exploded. "Damn it, I'll have Tim's hide for that! Withholding evidence is a criminal offense and even a reporter can't get away with it!"

"The car wasn't stolen," Shayne pointed out. "And Tim wasn't pressing charges."

Gentry calmed. "Where is Rian Shaughnessy?"

"Wish I knew." Shayne lighted a cigaret as he and Gentry walked out of the cooling room. "I'm looking for him." He turned, looked back toward the cooling room. Lessiter said the coroner reported a .38 had killed Sanchez. The thought momentarily sickened him. Rian had taken his father's gun, a .38 service revolver. Had he killed Sanchez?

Gentry was watching him, his eyes curious. "Something wrong, Mike?"

Mike shrugged. "I was thinking of Rian. Look, Will—give me a chance to find him. He hasn't done anything wrong—yet?"

"So far as we know, he hasn't," Gentry growled. He looked at Lessiter coming up

to join them. Lessiter nodded.

"Keep us informed," Gentry said.

Lessiter said, "I'm working out of Homicide now, Mike. You know anyone who would want Sanchez dead?"

"You might try Nick Sawyer," the redhead answered. "The Puerto Rican kid was one of his prospects. But he made the mistake of breaking one of the Syndicate's rules."

Lessiter frowned. "Syndicate rules?"

"Nick's a scout for the boxing end of the New York Syndicate. A kid like Pedro Sanchez is picked up with an iron-bound contract, sent north to the big city, given a big buildup. He wins a number of fixed fights . . . then the big one, against a dark horse, a pro. Gets his head knocked off. The Syndicate betting money is on the pro. The kid is dumped and another hopeful is fed into the system to take his lumps."

"You said he broke one of the Syndicate rules?"

"One thing a kid like Pedro is told not to do . . . get into trouble with the law. Nick heard me accuse him of stealing cars. One thing they don't want is a kid with a record tagging him."

"And you think Nick killed him?"

"You might check him out,"

Shayne said. "Or Slats Benito, the kid's handler."

They stepped outside.

"*Damn!*" Gentry growled, rubbing his hands together. "I came to Florida twenty years ago to get away from cold like this."

Mike Shayne smiled. "Look at it this way, Will. Twenty years from now you'll be telling your great-grandchildren about the time it snowed in Miami."

IX

SHAYNE'S OFFICE WAS a shambles. Lucy was standing in the middle of the real room, looking bewildered, when the redhead came in.

"Michael!" she exclaimed, obviously relieved to see him. "I called your apartment . . ." She waved her hand over the mess. "Someone . . ."

Shayne strode over to the small safe. It had been picked by a professional. Papers were scattered over the floor, his desk ransacked, even the vinyl-covered cushions on his couch slit open.

"Looks like they found what they came after," he said grimly. "That heroin packet—"

"Is in my apartment," Lucy interjected. "In my sewing basket."

He whirled around to her. "You took it with you?"

She nodded. "After you left, yesterday. I was afraid to leave it here. Afraid you'd get involved."

Shayne sprawled in a chair, shook his head.

"I thought it was the right thing to do," Lucy said defensively.

The redhead lighted a cigaret. "It's all right, Lucy," he said. He was thinking that fifty thousand dollars worth of heroin was a drop in the bucket to the outfit siphoning the stuff into Miami. But it was worth enough for them to send someone looking for it . . . enough to kill for.

They hadn't found it here. The next step would be his apartment, then Lucy's.

Only one person, besides himself and Lucy, knew he had received the packet. Narco officer MacDougal.

"Go home," Shayne told Lucy. "Flush that heroin packet down the toilet. Burn the box and the brown paper wrapper. Then take a cab to the airport, buy a ticket to Montego Bay. The hotel's still holding our reservations. Wait for me there."

She shook her head. "I won't leave you here."

"Whoever came here looking for that packet will be hitting your apartment next. I don't want you to get hurt."

She sensed the concern in his

voice, the seriousness of the situation. "You *will* come?"

"As soon as I can."

Lucy hesitated. He took her into his arms, kissed her. "I'll be all right. I'd feel better with you safe in Montego Bay."

She began to straighten things out. He turned her around, marched her to the door. "I'll take care of things here. You go on home, pack your bag, and take that cab to the airport."

Lucy stiffened. "Michael, are you ordering me around?"

"Sure," Shayne smiled cheerfully.

"I'll call you as soon as I check in at the hotel."

"No. I'll call you," Mike said. "Keep a beach chair warm for me."

He went down the stairs with her, saw her into her car, waited until he was sure no one was following her, then went back to his office. He scooped up scattered papers, shoved them into desk drawers to be sorted out later. The vinyl cushions would have to be recovered.

He sat down, put his feet up on the desk, scratched his head. Somewhere out there Mary's kid was running around with his father's revolver. And out there someone had sent him a packet of heroin that was wanted back. Because of the code name

Gladys he presumed it was MacDougal. But if Mac did send it to him, he had not admitted it. In fact, Shayne recalled, the narco officer had sounded shocked and surprised when Shayne called him and told him about it.

Tim Rourke had been working on the dope smuggling story. An ace reporter for the Miami *Daily News*, Tim had sources of information the police didn't have.

Mike picked up the phone, put in a call to the hospital. He was informed Tim Rourke had been released. He called Tim's apartment and got no answer. That left the *Daily News*.

Carl Dirksen answered. "Yeah, Mike—he's here. Hold on."

Shayne heard Carl yell for Tim, and a moment later the reporter came on the wire: "Yeah, Mike."

"What in the devil are you doing?" Mike growled.

"Working."

"Last time I saw you, you looked like hell," Mike said.

"I still hurt," Tim admitted. "But hospital costs being what they are, I checked myself out. Might as well hurt here, earning my salary, as lying in a hospital bed, costing the office two hundred a day."

"Can you get away?"

"Give me ten minutes. I'm

finishing a story on Pedro Sanchez."

"You heard?" Mike was surprised.

Tim chuckled. "I keep in touch." He turned serious. "I'm starting a new series for the paper. Calling it 'The Verdict Was Murder.' I'm going into the lives and the backgrounds of Miami's street gangs, what makes them, why they are, and how most of them will end up like Sanchez, shot dead in an alley."

"Tell me all about it at The Beef House," Shayne growled.

He hung up and was going out the door when the phone rang. He looked back, frowning. The phone kept ringing with an insistence he couldn't pass up. He walked back, picked up the receiver.

"Mike Shayne," he said.

"Mike! Did you get it? The packet I sent you?"

It was a woman's voice, at once familiar but one he could not immediately place.

The redhead said cautiously, "Yeah, I got it."

"Thank God," the woman said. "I kept waiting for you to call me. I have to see you."

"You're Gladys?"

"Julie," she said. "Julie MacDougal!"

Mike's stunned silence got through to her. "Oh, my God—I thought you knew, Mike.



Gladys is my middle name. I hate it. But Mac liked to use it as a cover."

"Where are you?"

"At home," Julie said.

"I'll be right over."

X

SHAYNE PUT IN A CALL to the Daily News, but Tim Rourke had already left. He called The Beef House and told Mike, the bartender, to ask Tim to wait for him.

The MacDougals lived in a suburb just outside Miami, away from the squalor and crime of the inner city. Julie had liked living there. There was a large shopping center nearby and a public golf course which Julie sometimes frequented. They had no children, a matter on which neither Mac nor Julie ever commented.

One of Miami's belt highways ran close by and Shayne made it in less than thirty minutes. He eased the Buick up against the curb and parked. The gun in his shoulder holster pressed against his rib cage, but it felt good. He had been set up before—he was taking no chances now.

He studied the house. It looked as though no one had lived in it for some time. The curtains were drawn tight, the lawn needed mowing. The rosebushes Julie had been so fond of were untended. A long narrow driveway alongside the house led to a single car garage. The door was closed.

Shayne watched a man come out of the house across the

street, leading a cocker spaniel on a leash. He was gray-haired, heavyset. He looked as if he needed the exercise more than the dog.

The detective waited until he turned a corner, then went up the walk to Julie's house and rang the bell. He could hear it sound somewhere inside. He waited a few moments, then, worried, tried the door. It was locked.

He stepped back, undecided. It had been a while since he had seen Julie.

There were long glass inserts in the wall flanking the door, curtained for privacy. Mike was about to try the back of the house when the curtains on his right parted slightly and Julie peered out at him. A moment later the lock snicked back and Shayne heard the rattle of a chain guard being unhooked.

The door swung open. The woman who stood inside shocked Shayne. Julie looked drawn, pale...she looked like a woman who had been ill. Her hands trembled. She was thinner, the bones in her neck showing.

"Come in," she said quickly. "Please!"

She locked the door behind Mike, turned down a short hallway and into a step-down living room. Shayne followed her. The furniture was new, he

noticed, expensive. There was a Spanish style fireplace with colored tile around it. A log smoldered inside.

Julie turned her back to it, facing him. Her eyes were dark, luminous, afraid.

"Mike . . . I wasn't sure. I'm glad you could come." She looked as if she had been crying.

The redhead felt uncomfortable. "Julie, what is it?"

She didn't seem to hear him. Her hands came up, her fingertips touching, probing the small lines in her face. "I haven't been well," she said. "It shows, doesn't it?"

Shayne waited, not saying anything. It had been a long time since he and Lucy had been in this house . . . not since Mac made lieutenant.

Julie seemed to sense his thoughts. "We did have good times together, didn't we? We were friends—good friends?"

"We still are," he assured her gently.

She smiled at him, her lips trembling. "Yes . . . yes. Mac often talks about you. We haven't seen much of you lately."

"Where is Mac?"

She turned her face away from him. "Don't you know?"

Mike shook his head. "I thought he'd be here." He was waiting for an explanation, why she had sent him the packet of

heroin. Why she had called him.

Julie wet her lips. "Mac always admired you, Mike, looked up to you. You were your own man, he said."

"Where is he?" Shayne's tone was blunt.

"I don't know."

She turned away, walking toward the small bar. Her voice was falsely bright. "Brandy, isn't it, Mike? See, I even remember what you drink. Old fashioned for Lucy . . ."

She picked up a bottle of Martell, poured some into a small brandy snifter with trembling hands. "We should get together again, Mike. You and Lucy . . ."

She was like a stricken bird, Shayne thought, fluttering around a bush at the base of which a cat waited. He went to her, took the brandy glass from her, set it down. He took her trembling hands in his, held them.

"Julie, what is it?"

She tried to pull away, he held her. "Julie, you *asked* me to come here . . ."

She broke down, burying her face against his shoulder. "Oh, Mike . . . Mike!" He waited until she stopped crying, stepped back, wiping the tears from her face.

"It's Mac. He's in trouble." "Heroin?"

She sucked in a deep breath, nodded. "It's been going on for a year, Mike. I didn't know, at first. But he began to buy me things—expensive jewelry, a mink coat, a membership in an exclusive country club. There's a twelve-thousand-dollar Continental in the garage . . . all on a police lieutenant's pay, Mike . . ."

Mike sighed. It was not an unusual story. A cop on the take. Low salary, high risk. Temptation all around. Life is short, baby. Get yours while you can.

But he had not expected it of MacDougal.

"I couldn't live with it any longer. I told him I knew. I had found packets of heroin in the garage, listened in on phone calls. I was part of it, and I was afraid. I hated the jewelry, the mink coat . . . but he said he was in too deep to quit."

She walked to the couch, sank into the cushions. "A few weeks ago, I had a breakdown. Mac drove me to a hospital up-state. He promised me he'd pull out of the racket." Her hands fluttered nervously. "He didn't. He said he couldn't. They'd kill him—kill me . . ."

"Who?" Mike asked quietly. "Who's 'they'?"

"Lew Ellison." She all but whispered the name.

The redhead stiffened. Lew

Ellison was a big name in Miami, a former politician. Lived in a big house in Bal Harbour, not too far from Will Gentry.

"You sure?"

Julie nodded. "I heard Mac talk to him. I listened in on the extension in my room. Threatening Mac. There's a big shipment due in—tonight, I think. It's Mac's job to see it gets through to the distributors."

Shayne set his brandy glass down on the coffee table. He felt sorry for her. He didn't know how he felt about Mac.

"Why did you send that packet of heroin to me?" He asked it quietly.

"I didn't know who to turn to, Mike. I acted on impulse. I know what I did was wrong. It could have gotten you into trouble. But I wasn't thinking straight. I wanted you to help, but I didn't know how to ask." She buried her face in her hands.

Shayne remembered how Mac's voice had sounded when he called him. Mac hadn't known about the heroin Julie had sent Mike. Had he set Mike up in front of that lunchroom on Front Street?

"There's still a chance," Julie said. "Help him. Mac will listen to you. You were friends, once."

Yeah, Mike thought bleakly, once is a long time.

"I'll do what I can," he told her.

She walked to the door with him. He heard her lock it behind him. Yes, he thought, he felt sorry for Julie. No matter which way it came out, she'd be hurt.

He slipped behind the wheel of the Buick and drove back to town.

XI

THE BEEF HOUSE was Shayne's favorite restaurant, as it was Rourke's. It had quiet, dimly-lighted booths which made for private conversation, and today this was more than ever a factor in its favor.

Tim was in his regular booth, waiting for Mike. He was wearing a hat which didn't entirely cover the bandages and his face looked paler than usual. A near-empty highball glass stood on the table in front of him.

"I've been here an hour," he growled, as the redhead slipped onto the opposite bench, "lapping up Mike's booze. What kept you?"

Shayne ordered his usual from the pert waitress, then said to her, "We'll order—a steak for me, eggs and pork chops for Mr. Rourke. Better refill his glass while you're at it."

"I'm not hungry," Tim insisted.

"You never are," Shayne observed. "Come on, Tim—I'm buying. And a good meal will put some meat on your bones."

Tim said, "Where have you been?"

"Doing some legwork for you," Shayne replied. "That dope smuggling story you're working on."

Tim scowled. "I thought you were out looking for Mary Shaughnessy's boy?"

"I am," Shayne said. "Just got sidetracked for a while." He told Tim about receiving the heroin packet and his visit to Julie.

Tim whistled softly. "*Lew Ellison!* That's a hell of a story, Mike—if we can prove it." He leaned back against the booth cushion. "Lew's got powerful connections in high places. You make one wrong move and you wind up without a license, maybe in the morgue."

"And you?"

Tim shrugged. "My paper's got clout and I know the publisher will go to bat for me. But if we go after Lew, we'd better get hard evidence—the kind that will stand up in court."

"I promised Julie I'd help."

"A cop on the take?" Tim shook his head. "Not much you can do for him, Mike. Not if he's mixed up with Ellison. I

think the Feds are closing in, and Mac will be caught in the middle. Either way, he's going to lose."

Shayne knew the reporter was right. Mac had made his own bed.

The waitress brought their order. But Mike Shayne was no longer hungry. He suddenly felt tired, depressed. He was glad Lucy was in Montego Bay, out of all this.

They ate their steaks in silence. There wasn't much left to say. Shayne paid the check and Tim asked to be driven back to the paper.

"Where's your car?"

"In the garage with a dead battery," Tim said. "I took a cab down here."

Mike shrugged. "Sure."

He was at loose ends. He had promised Mary to find Rian Shaughnessy, but he was getting nowhere. Miami was a big town—the kid could be holed up anywhere. It was one of the few times the big redhead detective felt helpless.

He pulled out of Bernie's parking lot with Tim on the seat beside him and headed north for the Daily News Offices. Mary Shaughnessy's tired, worried face stabbed at his conscience. He searched back through his leads for one more starting point—he could drop Tim off and go back to the high

school, look up a buxom cheerleader named Carol. He glanced at the dashboard clock. It was running fifteen minutes fast but even so he knew it was too late for that. It was well past school hours and anyway, he had the dismal feeling the girl wouldn't be of much help.

Tim suddenly tensed, peering through the windshield. It was gray outside, and it would be dark soon. The neon lights were already flashing over the store fronts.

"*Mike!*" the Daily News reporter said. "Ease over." He pointed to a car up ahead. "That blue and white Chevy taking the corner—I'd swear it was the one I saw the other night. The one Rian was riding in!"

Mike tried to make the turn, but he was headed off by a city bus pulling alongside. Tired commuter faces stared down at them. Mike jammed on his brakes, stopping in the middle of the intersection. He wasn't about to lose that Chevy.

Tires screeched as the car behind him came within inches of ploughing into the Buick's rear end. The driver stuck his head out of his window and yelled at Shayne, using unpleasant four-letter words denouncing the big redhead's right to a driver's license.

Mike's lips pulled tight

against his teeth, but the man had cause. He waited until the bus pulled ahead, then he cut sharply, nosing out a cab coming up behind the bus, lights signaling a turn. The cabbie swore as Mike shot the Buick past him.

Tim was hanging onto the dashboard, his face whiter than his bandages. "Hope you have medical insurance on this heap," he muttered. "You keep driving like this and we'll both wind up in the hospital."

The Chevvy was a block and a half ahead, moving with the downtown evening traffic. It was an old Chevvy, a '55 or '56 model, paint faded, fenders dented. But from the way it moved Shayne figured it was souped up. New headers, new valves, chrome engine fittings. He stepped down hard on the accelerator, trying to catch up, but a car swung in front of him and stayed there as they rolled south.

Tim relaxed. "That's the car," he said. "I had a good look at it. Same license tag, same dent in the trunk."

The Chevvy was just cruising. Mike stayed behind it. He could make out heads in the car, but he wasn't sure Rian was one of them. If he headed the Chevvy off and Rian wasn't among the passengers, what did he have? So far the kids in the



souped-up car had done nothing to warrant a pickup.

The Chevvy suddenly swung over to the left lane and made a U-turn, permissible at the light. Shayne had trouble getting the Buick around, but he cut in sharply and made it not far behind. If he had been tailing a suspect, it would have been a dead giveaway. But the kids in the Chevvy were not expecting a tail—and then he saw what they were after.

A black Volkswagen beetle parked at the curb in front of a drugstore. The Chevvy slowed, parked behind the Volks. Shayne had no choice but to keep on going. He shot a glance at the Chevvy's occupants, but

caught a glimpse only of the driver.

"That's Tony Spezak," Tim said. There were beads of cold sweat on his forehead, on his upper lip. He didn't look well.

Shayne shot him a look. "You see Rian in there?"

"Didn't get a good enough look," Tim answered. "They were in line when we passed and all I saw was the driver."

Shayne glued his gaze to the rear view mirror, slowing as he did. It looked like they were bold enough to try ripping off that car on a busy street.

He cut over, made a quick left turn and came back on the far side of the street. A husky-looking kid was getting out on the sidewalk side of the Chevvy. It looked like Rian Shaughnessy.

"That's Mary's boy all right," Tim muttered. He was gripping the dashboard again, bracing himself.

Shayne said: "You all right, Tim?"

"Good enough," the reporter replied. But Shayne knew he was lying. He should have stayed in the hospital a day longer.

Across the street Rian Shaughnessy paused. A young man and a girl came out of the drugstore and went directly to the parked Volkswagen. They slipped inside and a moment

later it pulled away from the curb, merging with the moving traffic.

"Didn't make it that time," Tim said. "But the night's young . . ."

Shayne was at the intersection, waiting for the light. He rolled his window down, glanced back. Rian had ducked back into the Chevvy.

When the light turned and he could make a U turn, the Chevvy had pulled away from in front of the drugstore and was rolling north.

It looked like he'd get to Rian after all. Shayne's spirits lifted. Now that he knew Mary's boy was in that car he'd head it off, pick up Rian, take him home. He didn't figure the other two would give him much trouble, but just in case.

He pulled over to the curb, stopped by a cabbie stand. "All right, Tim," he said firmly. "This is as far as you go. Take a cab back to your office. I can handle this alone."

Tim balked.

"Dammit!" Shayne snapped. "you're in no shape to get into another brawl."

He leaned across the seat, opened the door and shoved the reporter out. Shayne's gaze was on the taillights of the Chevvy rapidly moving away. He slammed the door shut, punched the lock pin down to

forestall any intention Tim might have of getting back in.

He pulled away from the curb, glanced into the rear view mirror and saw the tall, thin reporter standing where he had left him, threadbare coat flapping in the cold breeze.

It was a rotten thing to do, but the big redhead was worried about Rourke. The reporter had courage, but he was not of much use in a street brawl. And he had suffered one concussion already—another could finish him.

Shayne fed gas into the Buick's powerful engine and sped down the street, pulling around slower moving vehicles. He was risking a ticket, but it was a chance he felt he had to take. He started to close in on the Chevvy. They were rolling through a poorer section of town now. Fleabag hotels, pawn shops, adult book stores and girlie peep show arcades.

The Chevvy was just ahead now. Shayne slowed down. Soon as a chance opened up, he'd cut the Chevvy off, force it to the curb.

The Chevvy's driver surprised him by making an unexpected turn down a narrow side street. Shayne overran it, had to back up. The taillights of the Chevvy were quite a bit ahead when he followed it down the side street.

Old apartment buildings fronted the dark street. The macadam was badly in need of repair. A delicatessen shop cast a faint glow of light.

Further down the street ran into a small park square, its cool shrubbery and wooden benches a haven in the daytime for the old pensioners who lived in the surrounding apartments and aging hotels.

The Chevvy swung right around the small park, slowed for a moment as though the driver had spotted something, then made a turn around on the far side of the park. Shayne was a dozen car lengths behind. He saw the Chevvy pull up on the wrong side of the short parkside street and spotted the red Volkswagen at the same time. It was parked in front of a pawn shop, its motor running, lights on. Shayne glimpsed the driver inside, a tall, thin man in a black suit, talking to the shop owner.

And he spotted something else. A yellow Firebird in the park shadows. Mike had seen that Firebird before. Narco officer MacDougal's car! A stakeout!

The big redhead's hands gripped hard on the Buick's steering wheel. He veered off, went rolling up a side street spoking away from the small park. He jammed to a stop, set

the hand brake and lunged out, slipping his big .45 free of its shoulder holster.

He wanted to stop Rian if he could, but Shayne had the sickening feeling he was too late. He reached the corner of the side street at the instant the Shaughnessy boy and a smaller, tougher-looking kid spilled out of the Chevy and raced toward the Volkswagen.

At the same time Mac and the stakeout officer with him stepped out of the Firebird and headed for the pawnshop. None of them saw Shayne as he started running across the small park.

The pawnshop owner, a thin, sallow-faced man with a gray-shot beard, was facing the windows. He snapped a warning to the driver of the Volkswagen and the man whirled, drawing a gun as he headed for the door.

Shayne was too far away to do anything. Rian and the kid with him made it to the Volkswagen, plunged inside. The tall, pockmarked driver fired one shot into the car as it jerked away from the curb, burning rubber while it sped off into the dark. Then he whirled to face the two stakeout officers running toward him.

He fired wildly, dropping the man running just ahead of Mac.

Mac stopped, yelled something that sounded like an order to freeze. He dropped to one knee and braced his gunhand with the other as he took careful aim and fired.

The pockmarked man staggered, ran back into the pawnshop. Mac got up to go after him.

The pickup truck seemed to come out of nowhere. Shayne yelled a warning to Mac, but it came too late. The vehicle roared out of the darkness, slowed as it came abreast of Mac. A gun blasted, and buckshot slammed the narco officer against the building wall.

The veteran blue-and-white Chevy was trying to make a tight turn and head back up the narrow side street. The pickup cut across its path and the Chevy glanced off it with a grinding crunch of metal. It jumped the curb, scraped along the side of a building, came back onto the street and went roaring off.

The pickup was barreling toward Shayne. The redhead braced himself. He fired three shots, the heavy .45 slugs spider-webbing the truck's windshield, then leapt aside as the truck went out of control, jumped the curb into the park, tore through the shrubbery, knocked over a park bench and

came to a halt against the base of a stone monument.

Mike Shayne spun around as the truck door opened and a man staggered out, still holding a sawed-off shotgun. He took a few steps away from the disabled truck, then fell forward on his face.

The detective bent over him, picked up the shotgun. The man was the same killer who had tried to ambush him on Front Street. He was still alive, but barely.

The redhead left the man and ran back to the pawnshop. The owner had locked the door and snapped off the lights.

Shayne didn't bother with him. The police could pick him up later. He turned to Mac. The stakeout man with him was dead. But Mac was still alive.

He looked up into Shayne's face, recognized him. "Mike . . ." He was trying to sit up, get his back against the building wall. "Didn't set you up . . . last night. Want you to know. Lew put a tail on me . . . didn't trust me."

Lights were going on in the windows around the park and in the distance a police siren wailed.

"Was going to quit, Mike . . . promised poor Julie . . . was going to make a bust tonight . . ." His eyes rolled toward the dead officer. "Me and

Tarrish . . . he's a Fed . . . he knew . . ."

Blood welled up in his throat, choking him. Shayne said: "Easy, Mac. You can talk later . . ."

Mac's head rolled. "No . . . won't be another time . . ." He reached out, clutched the redhead's arm. "Julie . . . she knows. Dates, names, everything . . . in safety deposit box. Enou . . . enough . . . hang Lew . . . but get to her first, Mike . . ." His fingers dug into Mac's arm. "They'll kill her . . . get the hell over there first . . . promise . . .?"

Shayne nodded.

Mac began to laugh, a choked, mocking sound. "Those damn kids . . . spoiled everything. Got away with that Volkswagen . . . two million dollars uncut heroin stashed in it . . . in door panels. They . . . they're driving a time bomb . . . and they . . . they don't know it . . ."

His eyes closed and his fingers loosened their grip on Mac's arm.

"Sorry, Julie . . . for . . . everything . . ."

He was dead when the first police car drove into the small park square.

XII

CHIEF GENTRY ARRIVED later, in a squad car. He had put in a

long day and was still in uniform. His wife had gone to Fort Lauderdale to sit with her sister, who had the flu, and Gentry had not been overly eager to get back to an empty house in Bal Harbour.

He watched the bodies being lifted into the city ambulance, his face expressionless. The driver of the pickup truck, still alive, had already been picked up and driven off to the police infirmary. A tow truck was hauling the pickup out of the park.

Shayne had put in the call for Gentry. He drew the police chief aside now, explained what had happened. He did not tell Gentry everything about Mac's involvement with the drug racket...the narco officer had tried to make amends and died for it. But he did tell him Lew Ellison was behind the Miami setup, and that Julie MacDougal had the evidence that would prove it.

"Lew Ellison?" Gentry chewed on his cigar. "The department's been trying to nail him, ever since that fraud case three years ago."

"You've got him now," Shayne said. "Have a patrol car pick her up right now. Get to her before Lew's killers get to her. She'll testify now."

Shayne started to swing away. Gentry stopped him. He

was frowning. "Just a minute, Mike."

Shayne faced him.

"You told me about following a car down here and running into Mac's stakeout. But you haven't told me why you were following that car, or who was in it?"

"A bunch of kids," Shayne answered. "Rian Shaughnessy was one of them."

Gentry scowled. "They got away?"

Shayne nodded. He was withholding information for the moment. Sometimes it was wiser to bend the rules a little. He knew what would happen if he told Gentry about the heroin in the stolen Volkswagen. Gentry would put out an APB and with all patrol officers alerted, somebody was bound to get hurt.

Gentry studied the redhead, not quite buying all of it. He and Shayne were longtime friends. He knew the redhead better than anyone else, and he owed a lot to Miami's ace private detective.

"You holding something back?"

Shayne hesitated. "For now, Will." He leveled his gaze at the Chief. "Trust me?"

Gentry weighed this. It looked as if he had a big night ahead of him, anyway, rounding up Lew Ellison ...

"Go ahead," he frowled. "But, dammit—keep me informed."

He watched Shayne walk back across the park to where the detective had parked his Buick, then went to the squad car and put in a call for a unit to pick up Julie MacDougal.

Mike Shayne passed the slower moving police tow truck hauling the pickup on his way back to his apartment. He owed Tim Rourke something, and he needed time to think.

Somewhere in the city two scared kids were driving a stolen Volkswagen loaded with heroin, and they didn't know it. One of the two was Mary Shaughnessy's boy. Shayne wanted to find him before the police did—or one of Lew Ellison's killers!

He slid the Buick into its slot in the underground garage and took the elevator up to his apartment. He was sorry for Julie. He wished he could have done more for her.

He kicked off his shoes, made himself a stiff drink, picked up the phone.

Carl Dirksen said Tim had come in, but had not been feeling well and gone home.

Shayne dialed again.

Tim sounded tired. "Yeah—Tim Rourke speaking."

Shayne told him what had happened.

"That's great," Tim said bit-



terly. "Story of the year, and you kicked me right out of it!"

"I saved your neck," Shayne snapped. "And I'm giving you the story now. The police are picking up Mac's wife, Julie. She's got evidence that will put Lew Ellison behind bars for years. And there's an APB out for Ellison. That's the story break you wanted, isn't it?"

"Details," Tim growled, the fatigue gone from his voice. "I need details, Mike."

"Get them from Gentry."

"What are going to do about Mary Shaughnessy's boy?"

"Give him the back of my hand," Shayne growled. "when I find him!" He started to hang up, then: "Tim, you remember the driver of the Chevvy?"

"Yeah—Tony Spezak. Tough kid, older than the others. Used to run with the Los Padres gang until they broke up.

"Know where he hangs out?"

There was a silence as Tim thought this over. "No. But you could try Jake's Bar, on Eighth street."

Shayne hung up, finished his cognac. He had been on the go since Gentry awakened him early in the morning, but he no longer felt tired.

He flicked off the lights as he went out . . .

The small neon sign over Jake's Bar flickered as Shayne drove by. The overcast hung over Miami and a chill rain started falling, streaking dirty windows.

Shayne pulled up across the street. He was in a sleazy area. Winos lay sprawled like rag bundles in darkened doorways between hot dog stands and an occasional liquor store.

A patrol car came by, cruising slowly . . . it moved on down

the street, past the Buick, one of the officers staring hard at Mike as they went by.

Shayne eased the Buck away from the curb, slipped it into the alley running behind Jake's place. He was looking for the Chevvy and he hit the jackpot.

It was parked in a bottle-and-can littered lot, its license tags gone. It looked as if it had been there a long time, a derelict. A smart move, in case police came asking. Shayne had no doubt every bum in Jake's would swear the Chevvy had been there for months.

He cut the Buick's motor, locked the doors. The paunchy bar owner had said he rented out his back rooms . . . it looked as if Tony spezak had come here to hole up.

Finding him had been surprisingly easy. Getting to him was something else.

He had fooled Rufus once. He wouldn't be able to get by with it again. The moment he stepped inside that bar every pimp, whore and bum in the place would be alerted—including Tony Spezak.

Shayne remembered the back door. If he could slip in that way . . .

This time his luck ran out. The heavy door resisted his efforts. It was the type that opened from the inside only.

The drizzle became a heavier

downpour, spattering across the dark alley. Shayne pulled his coat collar up. It was still cold, but rain was better than snow, he thought. It looked as if it was finally warming up.

He ducked in under the eaves to think things over. Tony Spezak was his only chance to find Rian Shaughnessy. The gang leader knew where they were taking the stolen Volkswagen, knew who the fence was.

The back door was his answer. But he couldn't wait here all night, hoping someone would come out this way.

There was a way. It was risky. Someone inside might have a gun and a nervous trigger finger.

Shayne didn't want to kill anyone. There had been enough killing for one night.

He went back down the alley, turned toward Jake's closed door. He looked up and down the dingy street. The falling rain had driven people indoors. No prowler car was in sight. Good! He didn't want to get involved with the police.

He slipped the .45 from his shoulder holster, palmed it. He put his hand on the door knob, turned it, kicked the door open and stepped inside.

"Police!" He said, his voice loud and clear. "This is a bust!"

He got the results he ex-

pected. Women screamed as men bolted for the back door exit. Shayne ducked back out the front door and ran down the alley.

Men were piling out the back door. He ran into a couple and more women screamed. He shoved them aside and ploughed through, forcing his way into the corridor.

A naked fly-specked bulb cast light. Tony Spezak was just coming out of one of the two back rooms. He saw Shayne, but did not recognize him. He started to run with the others toward the exit.

The big redhead coiled an arm around Tony's neck and dragged him back into the room, kicking the door shut. The last of Jake's sleazy clientele had run out. The back door slammed and all was quiet inside.

Shayne shoved Tony back onto the iron-framed bed, stood over him. Tony was twenty, street-wise, tough. His face was fist-scarred, his eyes hard.

"What's going on, Man? Who are you?"

"Shayne," the big redhead said. "Mike Shayne."

Tony had heard of him. It showed in his face. He sat up, rubbed his throat. "What do you want me for, shamus? I ain't done nothing."

Shayne dragged up a chair,

planted his right foot on the seat, stared down at Tony. "Look, buster," he growled, "I know all about your little racket. Cruising the streets, stealing cars, selling them to a fence for a tenth of what they're worth!"

"You're crazy, man!" Tony started to get up. "I don't steal cars. You can't hang nothing on me."

Mike Shayne shoved him back down on the bed. "I can hang a murder rap on you, buster! I was there when two of your boys stole that red Volkswagen tonight. Two narco officers were killed."

Tony's eyes widened. "*Killed?* Hey, man, if you were there, you saw it. I didn't kill anybody. I don't even own a gun."

Shayne cut him off. "Where are they taking it?" he growled. "The Volkswagen?"

Tony licked his lips. "I don't know. I was just along for the ride."

Shayne grabbed a fistful of Tony's shirt, yanked him up close. "Who's the fence? *Where?*"

Tony squirmed. "He'll kill me."

The door opened and Rufus stuck his head in. He stiffened when he saw Shayne. He had the bung starter in his hand. "Hey!" he snarled. "What's going on?"

Shayne shoved Tony back on the bed, turned. The paunchy barowner was coming toward him. He drew his .45, said, "Get out!"

Rufus backed off. "Mister, I don't know who you are. But you can't come bustin' in here, roughing up my customers." He was backing to the door. "I'm gonna call the police."

"Do that." Shayne nodded.

Tony came off the bed, making a break for the door. Shayne stuck out his leg and tripped him.

Rufus slammed the door shut as Shayne turned back to him. Maybe he would call the police, but Shayne doubted it.

He grabbed Tony, spun him around, jammed him down on the chair.

"Let's go over it again," the redhead said grimly. "*Where?*"

The disclosure came reluctantly from between Tony's lips. "Red's Garage. South of here, off Route One. Place called Richmond."

Shayne didn't know the town. "How far is it?"

"About twenty miles. Have to go through Sunniland . . . take a dirt road."

Shayne shoved the .45 back into his shoulder holster. "How many in that setup?"

"Just two. Red Hollister and a mechanic named Spade."

Shayne turned to the door,

paused. "Red's garage have a phone?"

Tony shrugged. "Never saw one."

"How do you get in touch with Red?"

Tony wet his lips. "Just drive up with a bug, leave it. He's honest. He pays off."

"Yeah." Shayne nodded. "He's honest all right." He pointed a hard finger at the tough street kid. "If you lied to me, if you try calling Red, I'll come back for you. Understand? I'll come back for you!"

Tony backed off. "I told you how it is, man! If there's a phone there, I never saw it. Never called him."

"All right," Shayne said. "One more thing. Who's the kid with Rian Shaughnessy?"

Tony's eyes flickered. "Skeeter," he said sullenly. "That's all I can tell you—so help me, shamus."

XIII

THE RAIN WAS STEADY now as Shayne backed the Buick down the alley and turned south. He cut across town, eased onto the main highway and began to roll.

He knew where Sunniland was, a small resort village not too far down the pike. He had never stopped there, never had occasion to. It was in swamp

country, the Everglades just west of it.

Red's Garage was running a small time racket. Sure, dune buggies were popular around the beach areas. But even buying stolen cars for parts didn't add up to too much profit. It was kid stuff all the way.

Shayne scowled. All he wanted was to pick up Mary Shaughnessy's boy, haul him back home. By the ears, if it came to that.

He swung off the main highway and took a secondary road to Sunniland. Rain spattered hard against his windshield. He slowed as he neared the village, looking for road signs that would lead him to Richmond.

He saw none.

The country was swampy, treacherous. There were a half dozen small settlements around, but getting to them was a problem, even by daylight. At night, except for a native, it was all but impossible.

He pulled in to Sunniland's lone gas station. It had two old fashioned pumps shielded from the rain by a tin-roofed overhang. The proprietor ran a variety store and sold gas only as a service.

Shayne pulled up under the overhang and went inside. The opening door triggered a bell somewhere in back. An old man, gaunt and leathery, came

out of a back room, pulling on a slicker.

"Gas?"

Shayne nodded. He had been driving the Buick around for a couple of days and hadn't looked at his gas gauge. He'd hate to run out on some back road.

"Fill it."

The old man shuffled outside. Shayne followed him. "I'm looking for the road to Richmond," he said.

The old man looked at him as though he had not heard right. "Richmond?"

Shayne nodded.

"Nobody goes to Richmond," the old man said. "Ain't nothing there." He cocked his head to one side, looking the redhead over. "Figured you for the Keys. Good fishing there."

Shayne said: "I'm looking up a friend in Richmond. Man named Hollister." He took a twenty out of his billfold, held it out to the old man, who was replacing the gas cap. The bill came to nine-fifty. "Keep the change," he said.

The old man whisked the twenty inside his pocket. "Red Hollister, you say?"

"Haven't seen him since Army days," Shayne said. He was taking a chance, but almost everybody seemed to have been in the Army at one time or another.

The old man stepped away

from the Buick and pointed ahead. "Half mile down. Dirt road on your right. There's a sign, but the paint's wore off."

The dirt road proved better than Shayne had expected. But the seven miles to Richmond seemed farther. Swampland gleamed dimly on either side of him. An occasional shack advertised bait. A roadside stand, closed for the season, advertised cold drinks.

Richmond was smaller than he had expected. A few scattered houses, a single store.

He slowed, peering through his rain-streaked windshield. He was at the far end of the village when he saw it, a squat block structure under shadowing trees.

The road ended there.

Shayne cut his lights and swung the Buick off the road. He felt the wheels sink into mushy ground and stopped. A little further and he would need to be towed out. He cut the motor.

There was someone in the garage, a small window showing light. Wide wooden doors were closed. But a small door just to the right opened and a man in coveralls stood framed in it.

Shayne silently rolled down his window. The man's voice carried. "Don't see anything, Red. Too damn dark, anyway."

He went slowly back inside. The redhead tugged at his left earlobe. Tony Spezak said they usually left the stolen cars here, but that was when someone was around to pick them up in the Chevy.

Rian and Skeeter couldn't have walked back to Sunniland . . . he'd have seen them on the road. That meant they were still in there, probably bargaining for their money.

Shayne eased out of the car, pushed the door closed. Rain whipped at him as he ran toward the garage. He slipped, went down to his hands and knees in mud.

"Damn Mary Shaughnessy's boy!" he thought. "When I get my hands on him . . ."

He reached the side of the garage, pressed against the cold wet blocks. There was no overhang. Rain beat a tattoo on the tin roof.

There was a small window on the side. Shayne slid around to it, peered inside.

A couple of overhanging white neons lighted the interior. There were a grease pit, a tool bench, an overhead winch for lifting motors out of cars. A welding outfit stood in a corner.

And two scared kids!

Backed up against the wall, beside the red Volkswagen. The man who had come to look out the door was wiping his hands

on a grease cloth, a grin on his face. Shayne figured him for Red Hollister's mechanic.

The other one had to be Red Hollister. He was short, muscular, and his hair matched Shayne's. He was holding a small packet in his hand, shaking it at Rian and Skeeter.

The window through which Shayne watched was the push-out type. It was open slightly, allowing ventilation.

"Where did you get this?" Hollister was saying. "Damn you, kids—tell me!"

"Both car doors stuffed with them small bags," his mechanic said. "What are they?"

Red turned to look at him. "Heroin! Uncut—pure. I've handled this stuff before."

The mechanic's grin faded. "Heroin?"

"Worth one, maybe two million, on the street." Red's voice turned ugly as he swung around to Rian and Skeeter. "What are you kids trying to do—frame me? Where did you get this stuff?"

Rian said: "Honest, mister, we don't know. We didn't know it was in the car."

Red picked up a tire iron and hefted it.

His mechanic said: "Red, wait. Maybe they're telling the truth. Might be they stole a hot car."

Hollister considered this.

Shayne figured he'd heard enough. He started back for the small door in front of the garage.

He was wet, cold, getting wetter. He palmed his gun, eased the small door open.

"...kill them," the mechanic was saying. "Bury them in the swamp. Nobody'll ever find them. And we get to keep the heroin."

Shayne shoved the door wide open and stepped inside. "I wouldn't do that," he said evenly. "I wouldn't even move."

Hollister hit the light switch, plunging the garage in darkness. The tire iron came sailing toward Shayne, it hit the wall two feet from his head, drew sparks, clattered down.

Shayne pressed back by the door. There was only one exit, and he was standing by it.

"Rian!" he yelled. "Skeeter! Someone hit that light switch?"

A gun blasted, a short muzzle-flare showing. It sounded to Shayne like a .38.

A figure loomed up, short, blocky, wielding a heavy wrench. Shayne chopped hard with the side of .45. The man went down.

The .38 was blasting wildly, shots ricochetting. Then the lights came on.

Skeeter had his hand on the switch. Rian was holding his

father's gun in his hand, face pale, frightened. Red's mechanic was trying to get out through the small window.

Mike stepped over Hollister and motioned the mechanic away from the window. "Stay put!" he ordered.

He turned to Rian, watching. "Led me a merry chase," he growled. "Left your mother crying her eyes out." He snatched the gun from Rian's hand, backhanded the boy across the mouth. Rian staggered back against the wall.

"And if I ever see you with a gun in your hand again, I'll raise welts on your hide you won't believe!"

There was no phone in the garage, but there was one in the house next door. Shayne called the Miami police. He couldn't get Chief Gentry, but that could come later.

He put in a call to Mary Shaughnessy and let Rian talk to her. She must have been crying at the other end, and scolding, from the look on Rian's face.

Then he put in a call to Lucy.

It seemed to take a long time to make the connection. "It's Mike," he said. "I'll be flying in tomorrow. Hold a beach chair for me . . ."

He turned to Rian. "Let's put this show on the road."



THE DARK SIDE

by
BILL
PRONZINI

Who was sending the packages—the gun, the knife, the poison? I had no enemies—or had I?

TUESDAY, MAY 27, 5:17 P.M.—I have just had what has to be the most frightening experience of my life!

At a quarter to five I completed the dictation of the first half of my current biographical study, *The Life and Times of Douglas MacArthur*, and I was having a small brandy when the doorbell rang. I answered it and found a deliveryman from the post office, who asked if I

was Mr. Robert Simpson Bellew and then presented me with a small package approximately the size and shape of a shoebox, wrapped in heavy brown paper and bound with twine.

My name and address had been printed in slanting block letters with black marking ink—the printing was vaguely familiar but rather deliberately childish, as though the sender wished to disguise his normal

MIKE SHAYNE MYSTERY MAGAZINE

hand—and there was no return address.

I brought the parcel into my study and placed it on my desk, where I now, as always, dictate. Who could have sent it? I wondered as I used my scissors to cut the twine. A white gift box lay within the brown wrapping, and upon lifting the lid I found several sheets of newspaper wadded inside. I removed these carefully—and when the content of the package was at last revealed to me, I drew back reflexively, stunned and bewildered.

It was a gun.

I am not certain how long I stood motionless, staring at the weapon; it seemed as though several minutes passed, but in reality it must have been only a matter of seconds. The shock evidently consumed for the moment my inordinate fear of firearms, for I suddenly realized I had removed the gun from the box and was holding it in my hand. Hastily I let it fall. It clattered on the desktop, where it lay, gleaming malevolently, or so it seemed to me in that moment, in the light from my desk lamp.

My hands began a violent trembling. I sat on the couch opposite my desk, and remained there until this belated physiological reaction abated. When I felt calm enough I

again returned to the desk, and stared down at the weapon. It appeared to be new and showed no visible signs of use. I was certain that it was loaded.

I began, once more, to become badly agitated, and I could feel one of my periodic migraine headaches coming on. I opened the desk drawer and, using my letter opener, prodded the gun into the drawer. I could not bear to touch it with my fingers. It is almost as if I can feel it there beneath the wooden desktop, now as I dictate—as if it were capable of emanating small waves of energy. A shudder passes through me.

When the gun was safely in the drawer, I examined carefully the white gift box, the brown wrapping and each of the sheets of newspaper in the hope that I would find evidence of the sender. I learned from the outer wrapping the minor fact that the package had been posted in this city yesterday, but nothing else.

Who could have played such a cruel joke on me? My circle of friends is admittedly small and includes only serious and scholarly individuals such as myself. Brierson, perhaps? He has resented me since the critical success of *The Life and Times of William Jennings Bryan*. He considers his rendering of the Scopes trial far more qualita-

tive than my own, which of course it isn't. Or even young Price? He has barely spoken to me since I criticized his latest and really quite terrible painting.

And yet, Brierson and Price are hardly, at least on the surface, the type of men who would stoop to such malicious endeavor.

If not them, then—if not them—then who?

WEDNESDAY, MAY 28, 4:15

P.M.—I am not a man given to irrational fears, but I confess that I am at the moment filled with apprehension. Someone, for some warped reason, seems bent on carrying out a campaign of subtle terror against me.

As is my daily custom, I went for a leisurely stroll this morning. When I returned past noon, I found a note on my door from Mrs. Eldridge, the elderly widow who lives on my immediate right. The note stated that she had accepted a package for me while I was out and was holding it at her house.

I felt a chill touch my spine upon reading this and, moments later, when I had gotten the package from Mrs. Eldridge, the chill deepened and my hands again trembled slightly. My immediate fears as

to the package's origin were confirmed—it was a parcel of similar dimensions to yesterday's, wrapped and bound in the same manner, with my name and address printed in the very same block letters.

At my desk here in the study, I opened the new arrival—and stared at a content equally as, if not more, frightening as that of yesterday.

The parcel contained a very sharp, wood-handled butcher knife.

I wasted no time gathering the box and wrapping and wadded sheets of newspaper into my shaking hands. I took them into the rear yard and threw the lot into the trash receptacle.

My headache, which had steadfastly lingered throughout the night and had failed to lessen even in the cool spring air this morning, grew worse. I was forced to lie down for perhaps an hour, until the throbbing ceased sufficiently for me to move about. Undue tension always does this to me.

What should I do? I have no clue to who is responsible for these parcels, although, after constant reflection, it occurs to me that young Price is certainly a possible suspect. There has always been a hint of the cavalierly sadistic in his nature, which most of us have

translated as being merely the artist's zest for all manner of experience. But I have no proof against Price, and I cannot confront him without at least some evidence. Perhaps I should contact the police—

No, that would accomplish nothing. They would consider the packages the work of a macabre practical jokester, and they would not see any overt threat in them. One cannot expect the police to offer protection or the resources of their laboratories on such a "trivial" matter as this, can one?

I must content myself with the hope that there will be no more packages. The possibility that others are to follow, with contents even more terrifying, is something which I will not even consider.

THURSDAY, MAY 29, 4:55 P.M.—Another package came this afternoon, not more than an hour ago.

I was unable to work today, with my headache and the tension which has been building the past two days. I read sporadically, restlessly, and I would catch myself casting furtive glances through the living room window from time to time.

Price telephoned at 2:30, and I was so apprehensive I fear I lost my composure for brief

moments. I told him there would be serious consequences if I learned that he was the one who has been sending the packages. He professed not to know what I was talking about, and eventually hung up on me. It was impossible, however, to detect culpability—or lack of it—on the telephone.

When the postal truck stopped outside, I was oddly calm. I went directly to the door, accepted the package, which was of course identical in every way to the previous two, and carried it here to my desk. It was as though I had fallen into a dreamlike state, quite surrealistic, for even when I opened the white gift box inside the wrapping I had no reaction to the small, greenish bottle within.

The bottle contained, according to its label, a lethal rodent poison.

I was deliberate in disposing of the components of this package. My steps were slow and measured as I carried them outside and deposited them in the trash.

Even now, I am still relatively calm. I have spent the past hour examining every recent incident which might have triggered such fearful business, but to no avail. I still do not know what to do.

Why is he doing this to

me—Price or whoever it is? Why?

FRIDAY, MAY 30, 11:40 A.M.—A fourth parcel arrived a short while ago—but of course I had anticipated it. In fact, I had been patiently awaiting its arrival.

I did not open it. It went directly into the trash. I have no curiosity as to the contents, though it would not be difficult to tender a reasonably accurate guess.

I have not gone, nor do I think I will go, for my customary walk today. I spent most of last night and this morning thinking of the implications, the *malice*, of the packages—and for the first time in many years the prospect of a stroll carries no appeal for me.

Inside me is the intuitive knowledge that there will be another package tomorrow, and another the day after, and another and another until... Dear God, until what? I have known fear before in my life, but never any like this. I am terrified of something which I am unable to understand. Something dark and evil...

I cannot continue. I didn't sleep at all last night, and my nerves are frayed thin. Perhaps later today.

FRIDAY, MAY 30, 9:10 P.M.—I

will dictate only a short while tonight. The day has been tortuously long and seems as though it will never end. The telephone has rung four times, but I have not answered it; it was Price, of course.

I sent—

This damnable pain! I find that I am incapable of thinking coherently for any prolonged period. I really should consult a physician about these headaches, but I... But I...

I sent the packages—

Dear Lord, my head...

I am the stronger at last I am the stronger—

Pain, the pain... I seem to have blacked out for a...

Take the gun from the drawer I am the stronger take the gun—

I... I have opened the top drawer of my desk and I... what is happening to me? I feel as if I am losing control...

Oh my God, I'm beginning to understand! It wasn't Price who sent the packages, it was... the dark side, the hidden side of the human psyche. I sent them to myself, the dark side made me send them to myself because it wants to destroy me...

I have lifted the gun, I have placed the muzzle against my temple... no!

I am in control now I am in control I am in con—

THE CRIMES OF HARRY WATERS

*As a poet, Harry was a four-stanza bust.
And when Harry decided jails was his sole
possible sanctuary, although he tried to
commit every crime in the book, he could not
manage to get himself put behind bars until . . .*

by JAMES McKIMMEY

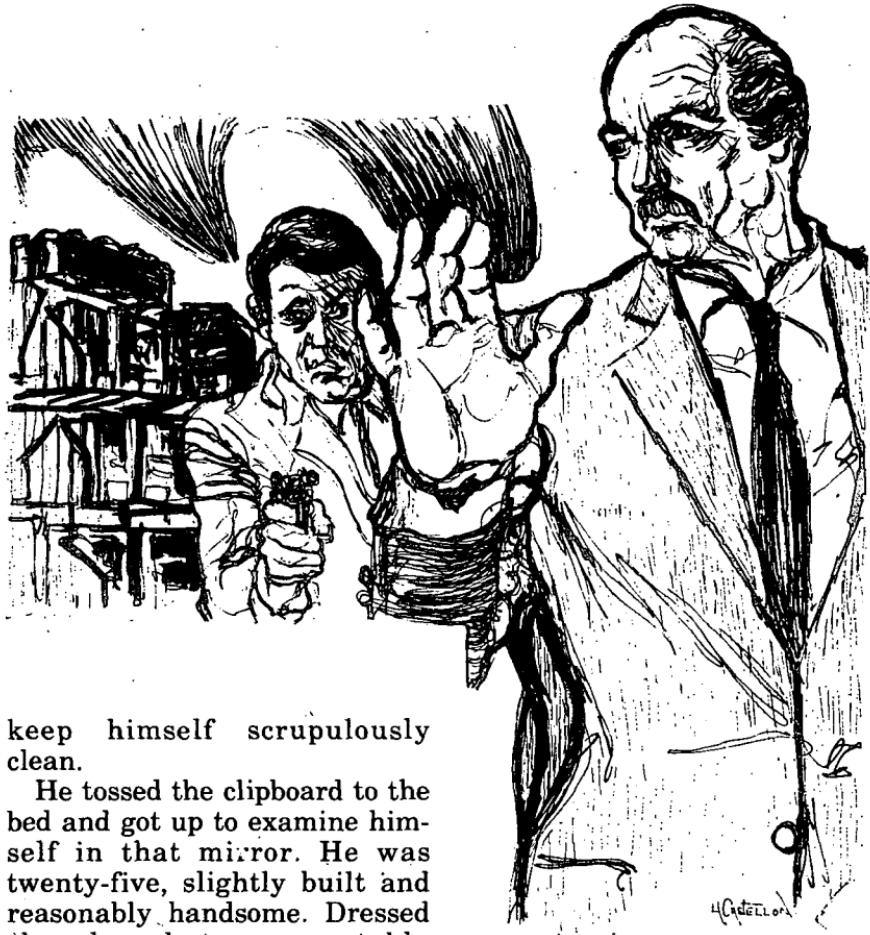
THE ANCIENT HOTEL, on the brink of being demolished for the general good of the city, stood just to the side of a freeway ramp. Harry Waters, on this late autumn afternoon, sat in a chair of his seventh-floor room and listened to the steady whir of traffic. His ballpoint pen was poised over the back of an advertising brochure clamped to an old clipboard—he'd gotten himself on as many mailing lists as was possible in order to collect paper for his poetry.

He wrote, *Good luck is the result of one's attitude, oh, Bird of Knowledge. Oh, Bird, one's luck*

can change with the creation of shifting attitude. Oh, Bird, there must come a time—

He shook his head, unable to continue, because he didn't believe it. Though he had yet to sell more than a handful of poems, he would not compromise himself. Truth was truth. No respectable poet could allow himself to attempt to diminish that fact.

He leaned back, surveying the small room. A bed. A bureau, on which an inexpensive hot plate rested. A crackled mirror. And, despite the low cost of the room, a small adjoining bath which Harry used to



keep himself scrupulously clean.

He tossed the clipboard to the bed and got up to examine himself in that mirror. He was twenty-five, slightly built and reasonably handsome. Dressed cheaply but presentably enough, just the same. So why was he jobless?

He turned from his image, knowing full well why. He did not *want* another job. He wished only to write his poetry. But, on the other hand, he did not wish to be put on the street to starve either, which was what was going to happen

shortly if he did not acquire more funds than the five dollars remaining in his wallet.

Ah, but what to do? He had checked with the Welfare Department. As a single individual he would at least be eligible for food stamps and medical assistance if he should

need it—but only if he registered with the Employment Department to prove that he was available for hire—and God knew what *they* might come up with that he didn't want. Moreover, he found it a distressing idea to present food stamps to Mr. Canaveslo, whose market he frequented.

So—nothing. Unless he decided to turn to crime. And could he do that as the singular alternative? The thought sickened him, because he was, in his own mind, an honest man who had stolen nothing and cheated no one in his life. He simply could not compromise that aspect of himself either.

Even if he should be able to adjust to such a compromise, he would be no good at it. He would undoubtedly fumble the attempt and be caught and . . .

His eyes widened ever so slightly. Jail? he thought. Was *that* where it lay? A cell, in a jail, with a bed undoubtedly as comfortable as the one he was on right now? Where he could continue to write without financial worry? Was there not a certain honor, even, in finding one's self in jail to continue a decent pursuit?

He lay there, continuing to consider the idea. Then, finally, he made up his mind.

Mr. Canaveslo's small grocery was two blocks from Har-

ry's hotel. He had gotten to know Mr. Canaveslo, a trim man with thinning gray hair, very well indeed. He knew that Mr. Canaveslo had lost his first wife and had remarried less than a year ago.

He knew that Mr. Canaveslo was less than happy with his second marriage, that his new wife was no helpmate in the business, that the 19-year-old stepson who had come along with the union was entirely lazy and leeched off Mr. Canaveslo.

Harry also knew that Mr. Canaveslo closed his store promptly at nine P.M., if he had no customers inside.

So, with the toy pistol he had purchased at a nearby variety store in a pocket of his old woolen jacket, Harry waited at one side of Mr. Canaveslo's place of business until Mr. Canaveslo came forward, locked the door and pulled the shade, signalling that he was now alone in the shop.

Harry stepped to the door and rapped on the glass sharply.

"Closed," Mr. Canaveslo called.

"It's Harry Waters."

"I'm closed, Harry."

"I have nothing to eat in my room."

"That's pathetic, Harry. Find a restaurant."

"I can't afford a restaurant. I just want a can of lima beans. For the hot plate."

"For the hot plate," Mr. Canaveslo said, opening the door. "You know I close at nine. But you couldn't get here before that. Writers are disorganized."

Mr. Canaveslo was dressed as usual in a white shirt, black tie and black trousers. He knew that Harry wrote poems, and he'd asked Harry to write a number of special-occasion rhymes for his daughter, a product of his first marriage who was now married and lived in another city. He hadn't paid Harry any money in return, but he'd given him several cans of the beans Harry favored, as well as jars of marinated herring, which Harry also relished.

Mr. Canaveslo removed a can from a shelf and got behind the counter beside the cash register. Harry removed the toy pistol from his pocket and said, "Stick 'em up, Mr. Canaveslo."

Mr. Canaveslo's eyes instantly showed shock. "Put that darned thing away, Harry! Are you nuts?"

"I want the money in the cash register, Mr. Canaveslo."

"Don't josh me that way, Harry."

"I'm not joshing."

"I can't believe this!"

"I want the money."

"Things can't be that bad."



"Worse."

"But this is stupid, Harry! Why me? It's a big city! Why not some place they don't know you?"

"I just want the money, please."

Mr. Canaveslo shook his head. "You know how to write jingles. But you don't know how to be a crook. Give it up, Harry! Let's forget all about this!"

"I'm not leaving until I get the money."

"Take the beans and go! No charge."

"The money."

Mr. Canaveslo shook his head again and punched open the register. "I'm ashamed of you, Harry."

"I'm ashamed of myself, but I need the money."

"Take it then! You want all the change, too?"

"Keep the change, Mr. Canaveslo." Harry put the bills

in a pocket, said, "I'm sorry."

"Not as much as I am!"

Harry backed to the door, opened it and stepped outside. He closed the door behind him and moved down the street a little way, then leaned back against the building to wait.

In a short time, a police car stopped in front of Mr. Canaveslo's store, and two officers got out.

Harry continued to lean against the building after the officers had gone inside, trying to estimate how long he should take before going back in to tell them he'd reconsidered and was giving up, after which they would stick him in prison.

He had waited almost ten minutes and was preparing to make his entrance when the two officers came out of the door with a handcuffed, frightened-looking fat youth between them. They wrestled Mr. Canaveslo's stepson, Arthur, across the sidewalk and into the police car. Before Harry would call to them, the car was racing off.

Feeling bewildered, Harry went to the door of the grocery, hesitated, then rapped sharply on the glass again.

"Closed!" Mr. Canaveslo called.

"It's me—Harry Waters."

"Harry!" Almost immediately the door was opened, and a

beaming Mr. Canaveslo said, "Step in, my boy!"

Inside, Harry said, "What happened?" He could hear shrieking from the living quarters above.

"Listen to her!" Mr. Canaveslo said, smiling happily.

"I don't understand."

"It came to me, while I was dialing for the cops. I realized I didn't want to blow the whistle on you, because I decided you'd do what you just did—come back and then apologize. You're no crook, Harry. But I thought maybe I could get some good out of it anyway. And it came to me—Arthur. I've hated him from the time I married her."

He jerked a finger in the direction of the living quarters where the shrieking continued.

"I told them he cleaned me out at gunpoint, then hid the gun and money and acted like he didn't do it. They bought it, hook, line and sinker. I've been in business in this neighborhood for thirty-five years. They'd doubt me against that bum? No, sir!" Mr. Canaveslo's eyes lighted with pleasure and victory.

"I saw them hustle him into the police car," Harry said apologetically. "That's not what I'd intended."

"Of course not. You just made a small mistake. And it worked



out, didn't it? That's a mistake I'll never regret."

Harry got out the money he had taken and said, "I was using a toy gun."

"Figures."

"Here's your money back, Mr. Canaveslo. I'm sorry."

"Stop being sorry! And put the money back in your pocket. Worth it to me to be rid of that moocher."

"But I can't do that."

"You're going to, or you're in trouble with me. And wait a minute. I'll sack up some cans of limas for you, and some jars of herring, too! I'm a grateful man, Harry!"

"I just didn't plan on things working out this way."

"Well, they did! Here's the sack. And when you get back to your room, sit down and think up a jingle for my daughter—she has a birthday next week. Bring it on in, and I'll have

some more limas and herring for you. Enjoy the evening, my boy!" Mr. Canaveslo said, escorting Harry to the door.

HARRY SAT IN HIS ROOM on a warm day with morning sunlight pouring through the single window that looked out on a temporarily vacant lot where remained some of the rubble of a building smashed to the ground by a giant steel ball. Harry was not hungry—he had breakfasted very well indeed upon marinated herring. His rent was paid. Moreover, by his standards, he would have sufficient funds, as the result of Mr. Canaveslo's generosity, to continue in this relative comfort for perhaps another three weeks.

But after that?

Harry stood and looked out his window, feeling frustration. He'd found reprieve, in that

robbery attempt. But it remained true that the attempt had been, in its intention, a failure. *Could he not even succeed in that?* he thought. *Could he not even land himself in jail?* He gazed dolefully at the litter of the lot below.

He had another idea then, quite suddenly, quite simply.

He picked up the paper sack that had contained the beans and herring, left the room, took the erratic elevator to the lobby, then walked outside and around to the vacant lot. There he selected a brick and placed it in the bag.

He went on toward the business section of the area. As he was moving past a block that was definitely an improvement over the one on which his hotel stood, he saw coming toward him a young woman he had often noticed, in his walks.

She was a strikingly beautiful girl with the sort of oval face that had always attracted Harry. It was framed by lustrous dark hair—Harry had always preferred brunettes. She looked at Harry coolly as they met, then away, quickly, with disdain.

Well, he thought, he did not blame her for her obvious contempt. He did not know how she supported herself—she saw her often enough to believe she did not work. But perhaps em-

ployment was not necessary, with her looks. And perhaps she could rely simply on that beauty to meet the financial difficulties of this world.

So where was his place with a woman like that? he asked himself, stopping, turning, watching her climb the porch steps of a large Spanish-style house now converted to apartments. No, he knew, seeing the calves of her legs flexing nicely as she moved upward toward the front door, there was nothing, in her existence for such as he. And nothing in his either, he thought, if he were heading for jail.

He moved on to catch his intended bus, where he sat with the sack containing the brick. When he got out, he walked along streets bordered by homes of such size that they immediately indicated the general wealth of the neighborhood.

He discovered, parked in the drive of an imposing home built above a sloping terrace, a Rolls Royce. He stopped, considered, then went up the drive toward the car. When he reached it, he could see, behind the house, a large patio with a pool.

Seated there, sunning, was a shirtless heavy-shouldered man in his mid-forties, browned so that the gray hair on his muscular chest looked totally white;

his head was not only bald, but obviously shaved where hair continued to grow. He did not notice Harry.

Harry drew out his brick, positioned himself, shouted, "*Filthy rich!*" and slammed the brick with mighty force into the Rolls' windshield. He dropped the crumpled pieces that now comprised the brick and waited as the large man in the patio jumped to his feet and came running.

"What in the hell have you done?" the man roared.

Harry motioned his hands in resignation.

The man looked at his wrecked windshield, and his face darkened even beneath the tan. "What in the hell did you do that for?" he bellowed like a bull in heat.

"I lost my head," Harry said quietly.

"Do you know how much a windshield for a Rolls Royce costs?"

"I'm sorry."

"You baboon! I'm going to give you something really to be sorry about!"

"Hit me if you wish," Harry said, "but perhaps you'd prefer to call the police and have them haul me away to jail."

"I'll do both, by God! I'll—." He touched the windshield. "Damn you anyway! Why in God's name did you pick my



windshield to do an idiotic thing like that?"

"I was just walking along. I had this brick. And it came over me. Your house is so large. The car is so imposing. I just became overly resentful, I guess. I have no money myself. I'm unemployed, with no prospects whatever. So I took it out on your windshield. I'm terribly sorry. If you want to call the cops, I'll offer no resistance."

"Dummy!" the man said, gazing at the damaged glass again. But he seemed to be regaining control now, and he reexamined Harry. "Out of work, eh?"

"For some time. A real job, that is. I do write poetry."

"What's the sense in that?"

"I sometimes wonder."

The man touched one of the brick fragments with a shoe. "I'll try to put in an insurance claim on this. But they won't... well, now, wait a minute. I do know something about insurance. This would be vandalism, wouldn't it?"

"I imagine that's what I committed."

"And they'll pay on that. Now look." The man pointed to a part of the glass still intact. "See this pitting? I've had this car for years and that windshield's taken a beating. Have a place in the mountains where we go a lot.

"When it snows, they plough and then lay down cinders, you see? The damned stuff keeps getting kicked up into the windshield. Was getting so when I was driving into the sunrise or sunset, I was damned near blinded." He nodded. "I needed a new windshield."

"I'm sorry," Harry said again.

"What the hell about? You did me a favor! I'll tell you what. I'll call the cops after you

leave. I'll tell them I saw someone do it and then he ran away. After that, I'll put in the claim—the broken brick's evidence. You did me a favor. So take off now. On the double."

"Sir, I don't think—"

"You heard me. I don't want to get into a heat again, do you understand? Just do what I tell you."

"You're a very understanding man," Harry said, defeated.

"Well, not too many people believe that. But—" He got his wallet from a rear pocket of his slacks and found a bill. "Buy yourself a beer and try to calm down. Coming apart like that isn't going to help anything. All right?"

"Yes, sir."

"Get out of here."

"I will," Harry said, and returned down the drive with the twenty dollars the man had placed in his hand.

It was becoming an obsession, Harry realized, sitting in his room again, to accomplish what he had set out to do. But the means had yet to produce the end, so he thought about it once more as the night deepened. What would really do it? What would get him once and for all in the old slammer?

Then he was visualizing the beautiful girl with the dark hair and oval face he had seen so often on the street. He knew

exactly where she lived in that large Spanish-styled building. Her apartment was on a side street. He had seen her, now and then, on a small balcony in front of a glass door. He had also seen her passing that door at night and enough of the furniture to know it was her bedroom.

He became more alert as he pictured that part of the building. There was a trellis going up there that just reached the side of that balcony. If he could . . .

He stood up, his mind made up again. A girl that beautiful? Not your old-maid ugly, who might dream of a nighttime invasion. But a luscious, desirable thing, who would scream her lungs out if it happened.

"Oh, yes," he said aloud and left his room.

There was no moon. Traffic was sparse on that side street. So he climbed right up the trellis, hoping that it would bear his weight. It did. Then he was hauling himself over the railing of the small balcony.

He moved to the door, thinking he would perhaps have to use force to get it open. But it was not locked. He went inside, unable to see anything. Still, he found a chair with his hand and began jiggling it up and down.

"What's that?" a tense voice

sounded from across the room.

Harry jiggled the chair again.

"Somebody's there!"

"I'm sorry," Harry said.

"Who are you?"

"A stranger in the night."

"What do you want?"

"Nothing . . . now. I've regained my sanity. Things just got out of hand there, so I climbed the trellis. I've seen you a lot on the street, and I knew where you lived. I just couldn't help coming up here. You may scream if you like."

A light on a table beside her bed was switched on, and he looked at her lying in bed with the covers drawn to her pretty chin. "I've seen you on the street, too!"

"Yes, ma'am."

"You looked like nothing at all."

"That's pretty much what I am. I see you've got a telephone on the table by your bed. You're free to pick it up and call the law. I'm not dangerous, I assure you. It's just that I simply belong in the lockup, where I can't do things like this."

But the girl simply stared at him with her lovely eyes. "And you had the nerve to climb up that trellis and open the door and come in here?" Her voice no longer sounded strident, and she appeared to have calmed.

"That's what I did."

"I've never experienced anything like this. Do you do it often?"

"When there's no moon, usually."

"God, and I thought you were nothing."

"That's really all I am—except when I do this sort of thing. Please, ma'am, call the police. I won't cause you any more trouble until they get here, then I'll go peacefully. That's what I deserve—being put in the pokey."

"Why did you come up here like this?"

"Because you're so beautiful and desirable looking."

"Oh, God. And you just climbed the trellis."

"True."

"Risking yourself physically."

"The trellis held up pretty good."

"Taking the chance that you'd land in prison for doing it."

"That's what I deserve."

"Most of them just buy me expensive dinners and things and think they're proving something. I've never been fooled, you know."

"I'm certain you haven't been."

"But you truly proved you mean it. The *risk!*"

"I should be put in solitary."

"Come over here," she said.

"What?"

She switched out the light. "I said, come over here."

"Right now?"

"Faster than that, if you can."

Quite some time later Harry stood looking at her in the light of the lamp on the table. "I don't know what to say," he said.

"Before you leave, get my purse from the bureau."

"Yes, ma'am." She had a way of saying things that seemed to make him want to follow orders. He got the purse and gave it to her.

She found a wallet in it and withdrew currency. "Here."

"I don't expect that."

"Of course you don't. And I've never done it before. But I feel you deserve it."

"I shouldn't."

"I insist."

He took the money and put it in his pocket, feeling defeated again.

She turned the lamp off. "Be careful going down the trellis."

"Yes, ma'am," Harry said. "Thank you, ma'am."

THE NEXT DAY, Harry walked along a sidewalk of his neighborhood's business district. He walked with a slight slouch, hands in his pockets, feeling the continuing pressure of more and more frustration. It was the principle of the thing,

he thought angrily—not only had he not achieved his goal, but he was proving his continuing ability to succeed at nothing!

Then he saw, ahead on the street, a uniformed police officer, ambling along in his direction, swinging his billy club as he moved. Behind the officer, down the street, a police car moved slowly in their direction.

Quite suddenly Harry lost his senses.

He ran forward, full-tilt, straight at the astonished officer, and hit the man in the nose.

"What—" the officer managed, raising his billy club.

Harry knocked it out of his hand. He had never before hit anyone. But he had seen fights on television screens. He knew how it should be done. He began pounding at the officer, knowing the man was going down under the barrage.

At the same time, from the corner of an eye, Harry saw the police car come toward with speed and rock to a halt. Two officers flew out of it and ran toward Harry and the fallen victim.

"Here now!" one of them said, grasping Harry from behind and holding him with a steely grip.

The other bent over the downed officer, then turned his

head, saying, as a crowd formed around them, "Charley, look! Do you see who it is?"

The man holding Harry looked and whistled. "Him, all right."

"You bet your life it is!" said the other officer, turning the fallen man over to handcuff him from behind.

Harry felt himself released and looked on in bewilderment as one of the officers pulled the fallen man to his feet and marched him through the crowd to the police car.

"I don't understand," Harry said to the remaining officer.

"That was Cop-Beat Andy. He's been pulling that trick for years, all over the country—dressing up like an officer and walking a beat. He'd go into places, without nobody asking any questions, and case the operations. Then hit them later. How'd you know it was Andy?"

Harry felt a pulse beating in his neck. He was unable to answer.

"Knew it wasn't the right cop for this district, eh? Or maybe you saw his mug on a poster somewhere? Doesn't matter. We're just grateful you dropped him for us. Need more people like you, in this world. There's a reward, you know. Or did you?"

"I didn't know," Harry said dimly.

"Fifteen thousand. Well, you deserve it, believe me."

"Attaboy, Harry!" someone called from the crowd. "Didn't think you had it in you. But you did! Attaboy!"

It was Mr. Canaveslo.

THE WEEKS AND MONTHS passed. It was late spring as Harry sat in the office he had created out of a small bedroom of the neat cottage he had exchanged for the crummy hotel room. He was using a desk, a typewriter and fresh paper now. New clothes hung in the closet. He could see, with pleasure, the shining sports car parked in the drive outside which he had purchased with a small down payment. He no longer used buses and he had become weary of cab drivers.

Yes, he felt very good now, because the last months had been rewarding ones. He had sold two poems in just the past ten weeks. They were purchased for a pittance, but that did not matter. His attitude had so changed that any day now true literary success would spring forth at him.

He had simply been negative, and that had been detrimental to the development of his talent. Not now. Not even with his funds dwindling rapidly as the result of his new life style. He no longer worried about

that because he now knew that one's luck *could* shift, as the arrow of a weathervane might swing from one direction to the opposite. He had had nothing but 25 years of bad luck. Now that shift was accomplished. So why should he have anything but good luck for the next 25? One could always stick up a grocery store, smash a windshield, climb a trellis, punch an officer in the nose.

He smiled thinking how he would enjoy dinner at a particularly rewarding French restaurant this evening, nurturing the good life he had never known until these past months. He had come a long way from canned beans and bottled herring.

The door chimes sounded.

Harry opened the door to two very neatly dressed men, one tall, the other short. The tall one opened a wallet to reveal identification, as did the other. The tall one said, "Special agents, Internal Revenue Service. Are you Harry Waters?"

"I am." His voice was hesitant. He did not like the looks of these men.

"We'd like to come in."

Harry nodded, and they moved past him into his living room. "Won't you sit down, gentlemen?"

"Thank you."

Both sat on a sofa as Harry

eased himself into his reading chair, seeing that they were staring at him coldly. "I, ah, don't know what—"

The tall man opened a briefcase and took out papers. "Did you file an income tax return for last year, Mr. Salter?"

Harry blinked. "Income tax return?"

"That's what I asked."

"Well . . . no. I—"

"Did you not gain a profit of at least fifteen thousand dollars last year?"

"Well, but I didn't *earn* anything like that. I barely earned anything at all."

"Did you receive a fifteen-thousand-dollar reward for the apprehension of a man impersonating an officer of the law?"

"Well, yes. But—"

"That's taxable, sir. And you filed no return. Have you ever filed a return?"

"Well, *no!* I never earned much. I didn't think—"

"When the reward was given you, did you not respond by giving the people who presented it to you with a Social Security number? And if so, when did you get that?"

"When I was sixteen, when I worked as an usher in a theater. I just kept the card in my wallet all this time."

"That number must have got lost somewhere in the machinery. Another thing—there has

been no trace of any 1099 forms being filed with us at any time, except as the result of that reward. How have you supported yourself, Mr. Salter?"

"A little job here, a little job there. I write poetry, but—"

"And no employer has ever asked for your Social Security number in order to file a 1099 in your name prior to your receiving the reward?"

"Picking grapes? Washing dishes? Working for bums like I have? What do they know about 1099s? I tell you—"

"You're in trouble, Mr. Salter."

"But—"

"Income tax evasion," the agent said coolly. "Fraud."

Harry found himself blinking more rapidly. "I didn't think about that! I'm a poet!"

"You're a citizen of the United States. And you've obviously committed two crimes. I'm afraid you're going to have to pay the price."

"Well, what in hell is the price! You mean I could be fined? I'm about out of money!"

"I think there's a strong possibility of imprisonment."

Harry sat motionless for a moment, then he threw himself to his feet, face warm, beginning to tremble. And he shouted, "Don't you understand? I don't want to go to jail! Now now!"



If ever a woman asked to be murdered, it was Helen Miller. Once she dropped her mask of amiability, even persons meeting her casually wanted to strangle her. True to type, even after her death, Helen Miller managed to get revenge.

THE BARN DANCE

by

B. M. HOFFMAN

EVEN BEFORE WE climbed the three steps to the Millers' front door, we could hear Helen shouting angrily through the open window.

"I won't have it. You think you can put something over on me, but I'll dig your grave. I'll tell Alan such stories about you that he won't know what to believe. If he hasn't figured out by this time what kind of rat his father is, I'm going to spell it out. You'll be begging me to stop before I'm through."

Brad's muffled baritone tried to sooth her, but she slashed at him like a picador, goading and stabbing until the blood flowed and the bull was ripe for the kill. Her language deteriorated as her volume increased.

"You bastard, what makes you think you can sit in judgement on me? You don't have as much taste as a baboon. How dare you criticize me."

I grabbed Charles' arm and pulled him away from the steps. "Let's go home. I can't spend a weekend with that woman." I shuddered at the thought of 48 hours cooped up with Helen while our husbands hammered out contracts.

"You knew what you were getting into," he said. "She wasn't any picnic when we met at the convention last winter."

"But her worst then was nothing compared to this. The venom in her voice makes me think of rattlesnakes and wasps."

"Carolyn, it's much too late at night to be fanciful," Charles said. "I'll grant you that she sounds like a dyed-in-the-wool bitch, but I've heard some pretty raunchy words slide off your tongue. Anyway, Brad and I need the time to work out our deal if we're going to bid on that bridge."

I agreed that we had come to Boston for Charles' business, not for the pleasure of the Millers' company, but I hated to face that woman. If Charles wasn't so devoted to his company, which needed the work, I would have happily forgotten the Millers.

Charles, as sturdy and forthright as the bridges he built, propelled me up the stairs and banged the eagle door knocker.

Brad greeted us with a mixture of relief and warmth. I hoped he didn't realize his front walk was better than a ringside seat at Madison Square Garden. His color was high but otherwise he looked singularly composed for a man whose wife had been raging at him not three minutes earlier.

"Why don't we make ourselves comfortable in the living room," he said taking my arm. "Helen will be out in a minute."

We followed him across the foyer into a warehouse of Colonial furniture and knicknacks.

A large spinning wheel eclipsed the elegant English fireplace with its iron hooks and antique cauldrons. The graceful room cried out for delicate French sofas and muted landscapes. Instead we got dark pine and somebody's uncompromising ancestors.

I watch Brad as he mixed drinks and spoke with Charles. He was a tall man with blond hair shading into gray and a web of broken veins across his nose and cheeks. His eyes, bloodshot and weary, looked as though they had seen a lot of the world and not liked much of it. His voice was surprisingly calm and he was obviously delighted to see us. Charles respected his competence and was looking forward to working with him.

Helen was a different story. She sashayed in, cutting off the conversation as effectively as a teacher with a class of chattering eight-year-olds.

"My dear, Carolyn, I'm so glad you've come! I was afraid you might change your mind and let Charles come by himself." She smiled coyly at Charles. "With such a handsome husband, I'm sure you don't trust him out of your sight."

Since I didn't know how to answer that inanity, I kept quiet. Her apparent sincerity

was curdled by my memory of that other voice, as uncontrolled as a forest fire. She fluttered, offering us cakes, coffee, peanuts, drinks. Fired with an almost manic vivacity, she prattled about her plans for the next day, her voice bruising my ears.

"I have the most marvelous ideas for tomorrow. Bradford says that the men will be busy all day so I thought we girls should treat ourselves to something extra nice."

I agreed, but I doubted that Helen's plan included browsing in bookstores or coffee in Cambridge.

She perched on the arm of my chair and took tiny sips of her drink like a jittery little bird testing a strange birdbath. Wary of her changeability. I watched my tongue, not wanting her to turn on me. If I could keep uninvolved and clinical, I might learn something from observing this scrawny angry woman.

Our itinerary the next day was harried and horrible. With unerring instinct Helen had chosen just those activities least likely to appeal to me. Our first stop was Brad's formal garden, a sterile grid in contrast to my own hodge-podge of wildflowers and edibles.

Helen had researched Boston's Colonial gardens and had

coerced Brad into laying out gravel paths and planting only those flowers available two hundred years ago. After pointing out a rose that looked like any other rose to me, she whisked me behind Brad's greenhouse to an orange sportscar.

Lunch was in a cozy tea shoppe, overdecorated in the same style as Helen's living room. She berated the elderly costumed waitress for forgetting the cream for her tea and badgered me into ordering the Lexington Luncheon.

The afternoon, which had promised to be better, was worse. Full of heavy food, we luggered ourselves over to the Museum. I could hardly wait to fling myself out of the car, ditch Helen and lose myself in the interconnecting galleries. Even though I said that I wanted to see a different exhibit, Helen wouldn't hear of it and clung to me like a child with a new doll.

I couldn't understand her possessiveness. Once I had inspected the insipid Americana she'd come to see, I felt that I was entitled to some freedom. Helen didn't see it that way at all.

"My dear, Carolyn," she said, "what else is there to see here? The best collection is in this room."

We left without seeing a single cloisonné vase or reflected water lily.

"Tonight I have the greatest treat for you, dear Carolyn," she said on our way home. "I am sorry that my son Alan can't go with us tonight. I know that he'd adore it too. The only hint I'll give you is that it's pure Americana."

AMERICANA IT WAS. In all the years I had been coming to Boston, I never realized that the Promenade Barn existed. Inside at least a hundred squares, each made up of eight dancers, spun and swirled to the singing caller.

I was stunned by the flash of ruffled petticoats under the bouffant skirts. The men were more moderately dressed in Western shirts and string ties. Everyone was obviously having a wonderful time — except Brad.

"I didn't know if you'd enjoy this or not," he said as Helen drifted off. "I'm more twentieth century myself. I thought you might prefer the pre-Broadway tryout at the Shubert, but Helen insisted we come here."

I temporized. "I'm sure we'll have a good time."

"You'll love the beginners' group," said Helen, who had decked herself out in a square dance outfit while we were

talking. "How do you like it?" She pirouetted, sending the full skirt flaring around her skinny legs. "I didn't wear it, because I wanted to surprise you."

"I'm sure you succeeded, Helen," Brad said dryly. I wondered why he had let her drag us here if he disliked it as intensely as he seemed to.

"Come on, Charles. We'll get you settled before we form a square." She pulled him along behind her like a tug with its liner and insisted on interrupting the caller to introduce us.

After a fast session of do-sa-doing and swinging, Charles and I were breathless. We crumpled onto the folding chairs along the wall and looked at each other. Suddenly we both began to laugh.

"Actually I'm enjoying it," I said. "Although I doubt if it will become my lifelong passion."

"I should hope not. Otherwise I'll turn into another Brad." Charles mopped his face with his handkerchief. "He was telling me that she nags him into going with her four or five nights a week."

"Doesn't she have anything else to do?"

"Apparently she's hyped up on the Bicentennial and anything early American. Brad's going crazy with her. She pestered him until he turned his

garden into a miniature Colonial Williamsburg."

"Why doesn't he tell her to bug off?"

"Evidently she yammers at him until he gives in. He probably figures it's easier to agree with her than listen to her. I heard her chewing out the housekeeper for some stupid thing this morning. She certainly has a rough tongue."

We had promenaded, squared through and bent the line before we saw the Millers again. Helen was drinking punch, and Brad called for two Cokes when he saw us. "I hope you don't mind Cokes," he said. "The punch is vile."

Helen's voice was shrill and cutting. "I love this punch. I don't understand why you're so negative, Brad. The least you can do is hold your tongue." She battered him with words, jabbing and hitting until his face was flushed and his veins throbbed.

"I'm glad she's not my wife," Charles whispered, pulling me away from the fracas. "I can't imagine why he puts up with her."

A raucous bell rang three times, paused, then repeated.

"Beginners' bell," Helen called. "See you at the next break."

At eleven, we left our group and hung around the edge of

the main dance floor. Now that we knew some of the fundamentals, I was interested in watching the more experienced dancers.

At the beginning of the second song, I noticed a middle-aged woman in a grey dress stumbling through the steps. Her partner, his arm around her, helped her away from the square toward us. I jumped up from my chair, and he lowered her onto it.

"She feels faint," he said.

"Not faint," she gasped, her face pale with pain. "My stomach hurts."

"Would you like me to walk you to the ladies room?" I asked.

"I'm afraid to move." She moaned and doubled over.

Meanwhile Charles, who had tactfully turned toward the dancers, said, "Something's wrong. Two more women are leaving the floor."

I looked up to see an elderly lady and a teenager being led away by anxious partners. Both were pale and I assumed from the way they hunched over, in pain.

As we stood there, fascinated, three more women stopped dancing. It was like mass hysteria. More and more women and a few men turned bleached faces toward their partners and tottered off the dance floor. The

caller stopped in the middle of a phrase, and everyone erupted into frightened chatter.

I searched wildly for Helen and Brad. When I spotted them, Brad was supporting Helen, whose natural color had receded, leaving two bright spots of rouge on her cheekbones. She looked terrible, worse than the women around us.

"I'm going to be sick." Her face in the dim light was a pale gray. Everywhere people wretched and vomited. The air was foul, and I felt nauseous myself.

I touched Charles on the arm and said, "I think we should take her to the hospital."

THE NEXT MORNING, while we were finishing our coffee and browsing through the paper, Brad came in alone, walked to the sideboard without speaking to us and poured a straight whisky.

"She didn't make it through the night. They're doing an autopsy now."

He pulled out a chair and dropped into it. When he had emptied his glass for the second time, he pushed it aside and filled Charles' cup from the coffee pot. His eyes were cobwebbed with red and his hands were shaky.

My whole body went cold. Despite the warmth of the

morning, I began to shiver with horror; my voice froze in my throat.

"Brad, I can't believe it." Charles finally broke the uncomfortable silence. "We'll leave right away. You don't want to be bothered with house guests."

"Don't go," he said, "at least not until my son Alan gets here." He rubbed his eyes with the back of his hand. "God, I miss that boy!"

The police came around noon, but Charles and I were excluded from their conversation. When they had gone, Brad reported that arsenic, traceable to the punch, and been found in Helen's system. The police were checking out the other dancers, but so far none of the other area hospitals had registered another death.

Later, my head pounding, I went upstairs to rest, but I couldn't sleep thinking of Helen's appalling death. Lying awake, staring at the underside of the canopy, I tried to puzzle it out.

In her own irascible fashion, she had clearly been having a good time at the Promenade Barn. Once she and Brad had mixed it up, but she had silenced him with the threat of taking to Alan. Just her mention of their son's name forced his retreat.

When I tried to recall how much punch she had poured down, I remember seeing her with at least four glasses, but she might have had more than that. From the little I knew about arsenic, I guessed that the more moderate drinkers would have taken in only enough to make them upchuck without any serious effects.

I lay back and tried to sleep, but my mind churned out fantastic theories. What if someone hated the owner of the Barn and wanted to frighten his customers and bankrupt him? What if someone, knowing that the men stayed away from the sweet punch, poisoned it to eliminate the women? What if Helen was really the intended victim? What if, what if, what if?

I must have hypnotised myself, because the sun had shifted away from my window when I awoke. My mind was ajangle with isolated scraps of thought. I couldn't piece anything together although I sensed that there was one fragment I should remember to put Helen's death in perspective.

AFTER DINNER we adjourned to Brad's study, a small room without a single item of Americana. It was furnished in Masculine Disarray with a sag-

ging couch, a couple of decorative old guns on the wall, and a battered desk cluttered with seed catalogs and a framed photograph of a young man.

At one end of the room stood a metal table loaded with peat pots on trays. A grow light beamed down from the ceiling. This room was the answer to how Brad put up with Helen's carping.

I sat back on the couch and watched him pinch off a leaf here and poke the dirt with a finger there. Charles, lighting his pipe and testing its draw, tuned us both out.

Full of pity for Brad's inarticulate grief, I said, "Do you want to talk about it, Brad?" He turned away and began to mist the shoots in the peat pots.

"What is there to talk about?" His voice was muffled.

My instinct was to prod him — force him to talk out his distress. I rubbed my cold hands together and then shoved them under my knees. I was so cold that it was all I could do to keep my teeth from chattering.

"Charles, would you mind getting my sweater?" I asked.

Charles looked at me blankly over his pipe. "If you want me to." He rose and ambled toward the door. "Shall I make some coffee?"

"Please do," said Brad, his back still toward us.

When we were alone, I hunched forward. "Brad?"

"You must be a witch, Carolyn. I thought that the first time I saw you. You've looked straight into my soul, haven't you?" He slammed the mister down on the table and swung around. "You know, don't you?"

I tried to keep my voice from shaking. "You're worried about Alan, aren't you?"

"The arsenic in the punch was the red herring," he said, not answering my question. "I thought if enough other people got sick, they'd assume that Helen was a glutton." He paused and turned backed toward his plants.

"She was a glutton. She ate too much and drank too much. She did everything to excess. Lately she'd climbed on this Colonial hobby horse and called me unAmerican if I didn't give in to every whim."

"She threw out our good furniture and stuffed the house with junk — bad reproductions and worse antiques. She harped at me until I put in a formal garden. That hurt, Carolyn. I loved my garden."

I shifted slightly, silently. Brad was talking, but not from grief.

"She drove me crazy. Years ago she was a nag. At first I gave in because I didn't care, later I simply gave in. She held

all the cards, I couldn't argue with her. She was a vindictive woman who had to control everyone around her."

"How did she do it?" I asked.

"She took you out to lunch, didn't she?"

"Yes."

"Who ordered?"

"She did."

"Was it what you wanted?"

"No."

"Why didn't you tell her you'd rather have something else?"

"I was her guest, and I didn't want to make a scene."

"Now multiply that incident by ten a day, seven days a week for twenty-three years. She started small. 'Brad, I don't like flannel shirts. You'll have to get rid of your workshirts.' I was newly married I gave in, but the demands escalated. The scenes, the rages," He covered his eyes with his free hand, "The rages, when I stood firm were terrible."

"Why didn't you divorce her?"

"And let her have Alan?"

"Didn't he see her nasty side?" I asked.

"No, she was clever at hiding it from him. I'll bet there'll be people at her funeral who would swear to her delightful disposition."

From the way he handled the plants in the room, I could sense his gentleness and love

for growing things. "Why did you give in on the garden?"

"My business hasn't done well with the economy so weak, and I had to use some of our personal money. She said that she'd been planning to take a cruise, and that I would be depriving her of a healthful vacation.

She'd been after me to plant something she could brag about, but I'd resisted for months. When she realized that I needed the money, she bargained hard — my garden or the firm. I couldn't have both. At my age, I don't have enough time to build another reputation. I gave in."

He wandered over to a large planter and began to pinch off leaves, dead and quick alike.

"What did she want this time?" My voice stuck in my throat. I could barely whisper.

"She wanted me to tear down my greenhouse and use the site for a one-room schoolhouse she had heard was going to be destroyed. When I refused, she threatened to go to my son with lies about how badly I'd treated her.

I've protected that boy from her until now, and I didn't want him dragged into our personal sewer. I'd sacrificed twenty years for him, and I refused to let her make a joke of my life with her lies."

My compassion for this giant of a man, hamstrung by a vicious woman, was immense. She must have been an expert in the art of mental torture. "So you decided you'd had enough," I said.

"Absolutely. When this exploded Friday evening, I didn't think I would be able to live another day with her. She tried to call Alan while I was still in the room, but he wasn't at the dorm. The school house wasn't the issue. She wanted to control me completely, body and soul."

Bradford looked down at the plant as though just realizing that he had denuded it. Gently he laid the leaves in the wastebasket and picked up his cigarettes from the desk. He waved the pack toward me, but I shook my head.

"When I knew I couldn't take any more, I checked my greenhouse for poisons from before I turned organic. There was one package with an arsenic base. I took it with me to the Promenade Barn and waited until the attendant left the snack bar.

"When Helen was dancing with some old man she'd grabbed, I slipped on the attendant's apron and poured it into the punch. Anyone who saw me would have assumed I was one of the kitchen help." He stub-

bed out his cigaret and lit another.

"Every time Helen asked for punch, I sprinkled some extra powder in her cup. She was so busy talking that she never noticed if the punch tasted strange."

"Wouldn't the other dancers have noticed?"

"It wouldn't have made any difference. If they thought it had an off-taste, they'd switch to soft drinks."

"But you rushed her to the hospital," I said.

"How do you know I rushed? I didn't rush anywhere. I drove fast — in circles. I was afraid of an efficient hospital. I don't know why I'm telling you this, Carolyn. I had planned to sit tight until the investigation blew over, then start again."

"But things aren't working out the way you planned."

"No, they're not. She was a terrible woman, but I handled everything wrong — from the beginning. I should have taken my chances with Alan, but all I could think of was all those years surrendered for nothing."

His voice dropped. "I had no right to take her life."

I pulled myself off the couch and moved toward Brad. I touched his arm lightly. Although I was shocked, I felt a profound pity for him. "Do you want me to call the police?"

"Would you mind? I don't think I could do it myself."

"Surely. Brad, I'm sorry for both Helen and you." Blindly I reached for the doorknob.

"Carolyn." I stopped. "Give me a few minutes to compose myself."

"Certainly." I opened the door and went out into the hall. When I turned to close it, Brad was still standing by his desk, his hand on Alan's picture.

I met Charles with my sweater at the foot of the stairs. "Come into the living room," I said, blinking back the tears. "I want to talk to you." As we crossed the foyer, a shot severed the silence of the house.

"What was that" Charles pivoted and stared down the hall toward the study.

"It's what I want to talk to you about," I said.



YOU CAN BUY "MIKE SHAYNE MYSTERY MAGAZINE" EVERYWHERE

*When a normally happy wife and mother
dreams repeatedly she is someone else,
is it wise to dig too deeply into it?*

LAST NIGHT I HEARD HIM CRYING

by

JEANNE F.
CAPRON

MAY 28—A.M. I've decided to put this onto tape, so I can play it back and try to make some sense of what's going on, inside my head. Because lately I've been having the dream again.

Always, its timing is late Spring. Always, there is the same middle-aged house—(light gray trimmed with white, dotted Swiss curtains in the dormered front windows)—set on the frontage of the same small



town street. The hour seems to be . . . oh, around six in the evening.

In the dream I walk slowly up the graveled driveway and look around. I wave toward a couple of little kids playing quietly on the lawn of the big yellow house across the way. A dog is barking up a storm somewhere down the line. And this burly dark-haired man comes onto the porch of the yellow house and hollers toward the dog. He spies me. He calls out, "Hi, Laurie, how's your sister?"

I say, "Haven't you heard, Mr. Kendall? She's . . . she's . . ." But the words stick like cotton fluff in my throat. I start to cry in big gulpy sobs. Then I run up the gravel, onto the porch of the gray house, yank open the door, and—

At that point, I usually wake up. All morning long, the jagged edges of the dream prick at me.

The gray house? Mr. Kendall, across the way? The name Laurie? Not one of those rings a bell. I don't recognize the street or those kids playing on the lawn. As far as I know, I don't have a sister. Why do I dream it all, so faithfully, as if it's a part of my past?

Then last night, for the first time, the dream dug deeper. As if tiny doors were winking open

in my mind, letting me see just a bit more . . .

I remember putting my head to the pillow, hoping that for once I'd sleep—waking up with not a shred of that dim world pulling at me. Then I closed my eyes.

...I start to cry and I run up the gravel onto the porch, yank open the door, and...

I can hear, deep inside the house, somebody else crying. A man's sound—muffled, as if he's trying to hold his pain in. I stand there, afraid—afraid to go further.

I went through the motions of getting Alec's breakfast this morning, and sending the kids off to school, hoping nobody would notice how troubled I was feeling. But Alec never misses a trick.

"The dream again?" he asked. I nodded.

"There has to be an explanation, Fran," he said. "This man, Kendall, the gray house, the girls, Laurie—they could exist. You may have seen a place like it on TV, or read those names in a book once, or even known the people years ago and just forgotten. Maybe if you put down every detail of the dream that you can remember..."

Which gave me the idea for taping. So here goes...

First, the neighborhood. Most of the houses are big old arks

with the full front porches and fancy gingerbread trim that were so popular a few years ago. The street is just a street—not very long and kind of narrow, lined with huge shade trees. Elms. You hardly see trees like those anymore.

Elms. Seems as though they *mean* something. But what? Maybe if I close my eyes and try to fit myself back into...

Nothing. Not even a glimmer.

Am I kidding myself? I feel so silly, talking into this little black box. Probably a total waste of time, tape and batteries. But I have to try—because something in that dream is eating away at me. If there's the tiniest chance this will help me find out what, I'll keep on talking. Period.

7:00 P.M. I've discussed it with Alec, and he agrees that I should try to get to the root of this. I know he's worried about me. At least, worried enough to go to the college library and search out books* about dreams and dreaming. He's been reading passages aloud to me—about total recall of dreams. Seems the first five minutes after awakening are the sharpest. With practice, a person can recall almost every detail.

Not only that, a person can learn to control the *progress* of a dream. Sounds unbelievable, but that's what the book says. And another thing—recurring dreams sometimes means there's an unresolved problem kicking up a fuss. I'll accept that. But *what*?

Anyway, tonight I'll sleep down here on the sofa (why disturb Alec?) and put the tape recorder nearby. As soon as the dream goes through its usual pattern...that's assuming I'll even *have* the dream tonight...I'm to awaken voluntarily, flick on the recorder and report what I see and feel. If anything.

MAY 29—EARLY A.M. The dream again. Concentrate. Try to remember.

I'm on the same narrow little street, walking up the gravel. I see cars—a Studebaker sedan in the driveway across the street, an old two-toned brown Chevy stationwagon in front of the gray house. The same little kids playing. That dog down the street, barking. Mr. Kendall, white shirt open at hairy neck, flashy red suspenders, standing there, grinning at me. I can see one of his front teeth missing.

He says, "Hi, Laurie."

I listen for the question. When I try to answer, the tears

* See: "Creative Dreaming" by Patricia Garfield

come, the gulpy sobs, the deep broken sound of a man's crying. I can feel myself panic, start to back away.

But, no, I can control the dream. Control, that's the key. I must stay and see this through.

I hear the man call, "Laurie?" I make a choked noise and move forward. He cries out; "I've lost her, Laurie. I tried to save her, but she's—gone."

Then I—Laurie. . . .

Is that it—the whole dream? It can't be! Because I remember—what?

It doesn't matter. I'm awake. All the way. Thank God I'm awake!

6:00 P.M. I played the tape back to Alec and it really disturbed him. He was silent for a long minute before he said, "Sounds as if you were reliving an incident through this girl Laurie. I realize you don't recall much about your early childhood, Fran, but could it be—"

"I doubt it." I cut him short. Now why did I do that to Alec?

It's true, those early years have always been vague in my mind. In fact, the first few years are almost a total blank. As if I'd lived in Limbo, not coming to life until Dad and Mom adopted me. But I hardly ever dwell on it. The Camerons

tried to give me a perfect childhood, they're a great couple, highly respected in their part of Dayton.

My marriage to Alec has been a joy. Mom and Dad are still back there in Ohio, and Alec and I are making it here in the Northeast. We have children of our own (you can't ask for nicer kids than Sally and Joe). We have no big money worries. Why would I want to relive those blank years when I have such a solid present?

Alec has some thoughts about that. "Sometimes a person will bury the past because certain happenings are too painful to recall," he said. "But they can fester there, stirring up all sorts of trouble. This recurring dream may be your mind's way of clearing out the dead wood—bringing it to the surface and letting it ventilate."

Alec is brighter than I am in many ways. He took three semesters of psychology in night courses and got straight A's. That has to say something. But does his theory make sense? Or am I just afraid of what I'd stir up if I explored my past?

One thing about the dream does stick in my skull, burrowing away. That man, crying. Why does it disturb me so? I've heard men cry before. Alec, the night he thought we'd lost our

Sally to pneumonia. Dad, when I got hit by that truck the year I was nine and he rode in the ambulance with me (he bawled all the way to the hospital). But that man in the *dream* . . .

"If the dream gets too heavy for you," Alec suggested, "we could call in professional help. There's this guy in the clinical field who lectured to my psych class. Really tops. . ."

If there's one thing I *don't* want, it's a professional brain-picker sifting through my memory. I'll stick with the tape recorder.

Alec's still reading me excerpts from those books. He says it's important to confront what you fear. His example: If (in your dream) someone is chasing you, you should stop in your tracks and let that someone catch up. Meaning, I guess, if you confront what you fear, you'll conquer. Sounds simple.

I except no miracles. But I did promise Alec I'd try.

MAY 30—EARLY A.M. Another night of this. There has to be a way *not* to go on with the dream. Because this is becoming the most *painful* . . .

Remember, Fran, you promised Alec you'd *try*.

Start further back in the dream, where. . .

. . . Laurie's coming up the street. The. . . elms? Suddenly I

know. This is Elm Street. And the town—I can almost remember. . .

Laurie's black hair droops on her coat collar, her round face is pale and scared-looking. Her feet drag as she reaches the sidewalk. I get the feeling she doesn't want to go there, doesn't want to see. . . what?

The kids, playing. Billy and Sue Kendall! I know them well. Laurie waves. Mr. Kendall come out. He talks, and there's this other little kid, on the opposite end of the porch, peeking around the corner. A girl of—maybe five. She watches Laurie come up the steps and go through the door. She follows, and hears. . .

. . . the crying. "She's gone," the male voice sobs. "I tried to save her." The little girl stands there, listening. But Laurie and the tall muscular man with the curly red-gold hair—Papa, (Papa?)—are too busy to notice.

Hey, I know that living room. The rose-flowered wall-paper, the rolltop desk by the stairway, the maroon sofa in the corner by the dormer window.

On the sofa, a woman is stretched out. Just lying there, not moving. Laurie rushes to the sofa and kneels beside the woman, takes up the limp hands, looks at them, places them carefully down. "I'll call the doctor, Hal," she says, "but

we both know." She shakes her head.

The little girl watches blood dripping onto the oriental rug, making blobs of dark red all over the design. She slips closer, sees the gashes on the woman's wrists, the pasty-white face with the wide-staring eyes. Then, as if realizing what she's seeing, she shrieks, "Mama!"

Papa—Hal—whips around and shouts, "Get Peggy out of here!"

Aunt Laurie (Aunt?) jumps to her feet and runs over to where I—the little girl...

"Sally Bolton, what are you doing, roaming around downstairs? You're supposed to be in your own little bed, sound asleep."

"But, Mommy! I could hear you holler to somebody down here, and you sounded so-scared. I had to find out what..."

(End of May 30 early A.M. tape)

MAY 30—7 P.M. All I know is, this has to stop, one way or the other. I'm afraid to go to sleep because I'll dream, and I'm afraid not to, because this thread of memory keeps nagging at me, wanting to break loose.

Alec spoke to Doc Ellis, who prescribed some heavy sleeping pills that should get me

through without dreaming. But is that the answer? Alec is set on getting in touch with that psychiatrist he thinks is so special, and it may get to that. I'm wavering.

The day has been a total loss. I feel too upset to take the kids shopping, too tired to catch up on the housework. There has to be a solution soon or I'll be climbing the wall.

I could get in touch with Dad and Mom and pump them about the details of my life before the adoption. Why have I waited so long to ask? Most adopted kids want to know their backgrounds. I'm twenty-eight, and this is the first time.

My head has ached like a boil all afternoon, which has made me snap at the kids and poor Alec, who only means to help. What's worrying me most is—am I going mental? The thoughts that flick through my mind, the sharp jags of memory, the clouded areas I'm afraid to explore—

One thing I do know. Tonight I sleep. With Alec, in our own comfortable bed. Without dreams.

JUNE 3—2 P.M. For three nights I've slept like a rock. If I did any dreaming, I can't remember it. Which should make me feel just great. But here I am, still dragging around. I feel

on edge. One wrong word from anyone would probably send me flying to my room in tears.

I tried call my mother in Dayton but nobody answer. Mom, don't you know I need the sound of your voice more, right now, than I have in years? Because I'm afraid. I am so afraid...

7:00 P.M. Guess I'm really in for it now. Alec came home all excited. He'd been talking to his psychiatrist friend, and the man said that with the training Alec has had, *he* can work on my problem. It takes a knowledge of therapeutic hypnotism and the ability to know when to pursue and when to drop a subject.

"He spelled out the warning signals that say danger ahead," Alec said. "And he trusts me to tread lightly. So, if you're willing, Fran—"

Well, what could I say? I mean, Alec does know how to hypnotize, and he's intelligent, and he knows *me*. Maybe better than I know myself. If anything goes wrong, he can call on his friend for help. So why am I scared?

"You can try," I told Alec. "But I want the tape recorder right here with me. It's become like an old pal, someone I can talk to when I can't talk to anyone else." In a way, the recorder has become a crutch. But

right now I need that crutch.

Anyway, tomorrow afternoon at one, the kids will be in school and Alec is taking time off from work to try to shake me out of this. We'll be alone. And if the hypnosis session works, it'll be over. I hope.

JUNE 4—1:30 P.M. (Start of hypnosis tape)

"That's right, Fran, just lie back and let go. Relax your toes, your fingers—now your legs, your arms, your neck.

"Keep looking at me, Fran. Your eyes are getting heavy—heavier—you're going to sleep—deep sleep."

(Space on tape, then measured breathing)

"You're going back—back to another year, a certain day in your life. You'll remember everything, everything that happened on that day. Your name is Peggy and you're five years old. It's evening, late Spring. You know the evening I mean. You're playing on the front porch of your house, the house on Elm Street. You're waiting—waiting for—whom are you waiting for, Peggy?"

(Long breathing space on tape)

"Papa. I'm waiting for my Papa.

"Where is your Papa?

He in the house—with Mama. He told me to run out

and play. But I didn't want to! I wanted to stay and sit next to my Mama. She was crying real hard, and Papa was shouting at her, then I started to cry, and he said, "Beat it out of here, kid, and don't come back 'til I call you!" So I went outside.

*Why was your Mama crying?
I don't know. I don't know!*

"Think hard, Peggy. It's important that you recall..."

...Aunt Laurie. She was talking about Aunt Laurie and Papa. She said he was something, I don't remember the word—with Aunt Laurie. It make Papa awful mad, and he hollered and said Mama was crazy as a loon if she believed...

(Labored breathing on tape)

Okay, Peggy, let's go back now and try to recall what happened after you got out on the porch, before your Aunt Laurie came up the walk. Did you hear strange noises in the house? Did you peek through the window and see..."

...Mama was still crying, and I saw her go into her sewing basket and grab up her scissors, and Papa tried to stop her, but she was awful strong. And she was yelling. And then she fell, and I...

"Your Aunt Laurie came along and went up the porch steps, and you followed her."

I... I could hear Papa crying and Mama was on the sofa and

Aunt Laurie took Mama's hands, and she said, "I'll call the doctor, Hal, but we both know." And then I saw all that blood, and Mama was just lying there, so still... and I... screamed, and Papa sent me out again...

"Go on, Peggy, what happened next?"

I... can't. Don't make me!

After a while I heard these, loud popping noises. Like *bam! bam!* I looked in the window, and there was Aunt Laurie, with this big hole in her face, stretched out on the floor, and Papa was falling on top of her and I saw Mr. Kendall on his porch and I shrieked out to him and he came running over, and went right past me and into the house. I heard him say, "Oh, my God." Then he was talking on the phone. I couldn't hear him very well, but I could see blood, whole bunches of it, all over the rug. And...

"And then, Peggy? And then?"

(Ragged breathing, followed by whimpering sound)

"I think you've had it, girl, You're coming out of this before I muff the whole job and really damage— Okay, when I touch your left arm, you will wake up. You will no longer be five-year-old Peggy, you will be Fran—Fran Cameron Bolton. You will remember everything

you told me but the pain and the hurt will be gone. You will no longer fear the old ghosts, I hope, I hope.

"I'm touching you, Fran. I'm releasing you."

JUNE 9—10:00 Well, friend, I'll new me? This empty shell? Alec promised the pain and hurt would be gone, the old ghosts would no longer haunt. But he forgot to tell me what would take their place. It's as if a kind of *nothingness* had seeped into the cracks of my soul, drying out all the tender places. Alec is scared, and something tells me he has good reason to be.

He's called Mom, in Dayton, and she's flying out. I guess he figures she can perform some magic that will turn me back into a person. All right, she can talk to me, tell me the rest of the story, whatever she thinks will do the trick. I'll listen to anything as long as I'm allowed to bring the recorder. With my old friend there I know I'll be safe. . .

JUNE 8—10:00 Well, friend, I'll fill you in on what happened. But we'll keep it secret, between the two of us. Okay? You, I trust.

Mom has come and gone. She arrived three days ago on the 5:20 flight from Dayton, and

she left on this afternoon's flight. Alec started the ball rolling by bringing her up to date. He ran the hypnosis tape and when the last of it petered to silence, she just sat there staring at me.

"Oh my poor baby," she said, "you have been through so much." Then she opened her mouth and told us the rest of Peggy Sullivan's history.

First, about the urgent phone call from Mr. Kendall (to the hospital emergency room where Mom worked as a charge nurse). And then about how she'd followed the progress of the little Sullivan kid who lived in that gray ark of a house on Elm Street and whose parents had committed suicide and whose aunt had been brutally murdered.

She said the Kendalls took Peggy—me—in while the local authorities searched for close relatives. It developed there were none. At least, none willing to take me under their wing. She said, for the months I lived with the Kendalls, I spoke not a word. They knew I needed more help than they could give. But that would take money. And the Kendalls had their own kids to feed and clothe and worry about.

To the Child Welfare Department, I was just another unfortunate case. For a while,

Mom and Dad stood on the sidelines, watching and getting more troubles, while the Kendalls tried to make do with the little zombie they got stuck with. And then one day Mom and Dad stepped in.

Mom said it took months and much love before I pulled out of my fog and talked and played like a normal kid. "We figured we had to make a clean break with your past," she told me. "So we moved out of the state, and changed your name. It seemed at the time, the further we stayed from all the bad memories, the better off you'd be.

"We were afraid you'd go back into that shell. So we simply told you that you were adopted and let it go at that. And since you didn't ask questions..."

They had lived in that town all their lives, had good jobs there, good friends. Then along came this disturbed little girl, and *poof!*—they had cut loose. Why does that make me feel so guilty?

"It should have occurred to us your memory wouldn't stay blank forever," Mom said. "If we could do it over. I'd have taken you for treatment—gradually fed you the facts. But you seemed to have totally forgotten those years." Then she looked up at me, her eyes clouding. "At least, we assumed

you'd forgotten. Tell me, Fran, were we wrong?"

Should I have told her about those nights during my "care-free" childhood after the lights went out, when I'd cower under my bedsheets, my ears straining, listening for...what? A man's broken crying? A little girl shrieking, "*Mama?*" Always, during those nights, there'd be a shred of...something hanging at the edge of my dreams. The next morning would find me with tears streaming down my cheeks and a feeling of tremendous sadness weighing me down like chains.

"About the Sullivans, Mom," I brought up. "Did anyone ever find out what caused the woman—my mother—to kill herself?"

"Poor Ella really had a family problem," Mom said. "According to Bob Kendall, it wasn't all in her head. He lived across the street, and he was a sharp man in his own way. It seemed that Ella worked three nights a week at a local supermarket, trying to supplement Hal's income and she hired her sister, Laurie, to babysit with you.

Hal was supposed to be working at a drugstore on the corner of Elm and Woodward Avenue. But he'd find excuses to go home of an evening and of course there'd be Laurie,

younger and prettier than Ella, and, I suppose, more fun..."

I can see Aunt Laurie now—the long black hair that shines as if she's brushed it a thousand strokes, the sparkly brown eyes, the bright red slacks, the tight white sweater that Papa makes jokes about. I can see them both putting me to bed, then strolling together down the stairs. How quiet it always gets down there...as if they've fallen asleep. Aunt Laurie's turned on the record player. I can hear the murmur of their voices, hear the soft laughter...

(Long pause on tape)

"Bob Kendall saw a few things himself," Mom said. "Hal and Laurie would grow careless and neighbors do have eyes—and mouths. It got back to Ella. She became increasingly nervous and her moods grew more unpredictable. When she was laid off at the supermarket, that gave her plenty of time to brood. And accuse. She talked suicide, but Hal thought it was just that. Talk..."

I can hear loud voices, Papa's and Mama's, snapping back and forth. And Mama's, screaming those words about Aunt Laurie. And I can see her run over to grab up the scissors...

"When Ella finally did the unthinkable," Mom said, "Hal's whole world just came apart at

the seams. About then Laurie must have walked in. Sure enough, his worst fears were confirmed. Ella was dead. I suppose, to Hal—at the moment—death to the guilty parties might have seemed the only solution. Nobody seemed to remember, or care, that outside the door stood little Peggy, taking in a horrifying scene that her child's mind couldn't possibly make sense of..."

...I walk slowly up the driveway and look around. I wave to the Kendall kids playing on the lawn of their big yellow house. Somewhere down the line a dog is barking. Mr. Kendall comes out, hollers at the dog, sees me. He flashes his gap-toothed grin and calls to me, "Hi, Laurie, how's your sister?" And I say, "Haven't you heard? She's..." The words stick in my throat. I start to sob.

"Fran, the kids have gone to bed. Don't you think it's time you and I? Fran, what is it? What's *wrong*? Why are you still using that recorder? There's no longer a need..."

...and I can hear, deep inside the house, somebody else crying. Hal's sound, muffled, as if he's trying to hold his pain in. And I stand there, afraid. So afraid! Hal calls out, "Laurie?" And then, "Laurie, I've lost her. I've lost her. I've... lost...lost...."

HIT AND RUN

by EDWARD VAN DER RHOER

Riordan couldn't figure out why Dr. Farber was on Skid Row when he was killed—by the time he did, the case had turned inside out.

WHEN A MAN DIES in a hit-and-run accident, an old homicide detective like Mike Riordan always smells the possibility of first-degree murder.

It was true that Riordan did not smell that possibility when Ellen Farber first approached him. He was sitting in his favorite command seat on his twenty-five foot powerboat, feet propped up on the railing, his chunky, tanned fifty-year-old body clad only in brief khaki swimming trunks.

He had just narrowed down

the choice in the sixth at Florida Downs—the feature race of the day—to three of the entries in the Racing Form when he heard a low, cultured voice calling his name.

Riordan looked up from the newspaper, brushing a long lock of red hair out of his eyes. It was like extinguishing a flame. Then he saw a woman standing on the wooden pier beside his boat. At first he mistook her for a boy, for she was not much more than boy-sized in her navy blue pants suit,



and her nondescript blonde hair was cut very short.

"Mr. Riordan?" the woman asked.

He folded up the *Racing Form* with a scowl, nodding at the same time. "If it's business," he said, "my office is over there, in one of them store fronts."

"I know. I was already over there," the woman said, giving him a level gaze out of cold gray eyes, not at all intimidated. "I saw the 'Out to Lunch' sign. Are you always out to lunch at ten o'clock in the morning?"

"Who are you?" Riordan said. "What is it you want?"

"My name is Ellen Farber, and I have a job for you. May I come on board?"

"Don't fall in the drink," Riordan growled, but the woman had already jumped off the pier and landed lightly in the boat.

As she climbed the steps to his vantage point on the upper deck, Riordan saw the harsh lines etched in her face and knew that she was not as young as she had appeared when he first caught sight of her on the pier.

Ellen Farber settled into the seat next to him just as he was on the point of inviting her to sit down. "I went to the police department here," she said "but

they wouldn't do anything for me. Someone I talked to recommended you. You're a private detective, aren't you?"

"Sort of," he said, still irritated at being disturbed while he was doping the races. "I'm retired. I used to be a detective lieutenant back in New York City."

"Well, as I said, I have a job for you."

"I don't do much business now. I don't have to. Only if I'm interested."

Ellen Farber was a woman who never seemed to smile. "My husband was killed recently in a hit-and-run accident and I want you to investigate."

"Let the cops investigate. That's their job. Haven't they caught the guy who did it yet?"

"No," she said curtly. "But that's not what I want you to investigate."

Riordan brought his legs down with a thud and sat straight up. "What the—what do you want?"

"Do you mind if I begin at the beginning?" she said. She looked at him for a moment, then went on. "My husband and I have been separated. His name is Dr. Randolph Farber and he was an orthopedic surgeon with his own practice here in St. Petersburg. I have been living in Chicago where we came from originally."

"When was your husband killed?"

"It happened last month in Tampa. He was run over by a car. According to the police report, he was dead on arrival at the hospital."

"And they didn't catch this hit-and-run driver?"

She shook her head. "They don't seem to have any clues."

That was when Riordan began to get the vibrations and he made up his mind to check with one of his buddies in the department. "You said you weren't living with your husband."

"No," she said with the same cold, distant manner. "He walked out on me and the court ordered him to pay for my support."

"Any children?"

She shook her head again.

"It's kinda unusual, isn't it?" Riordan said, impaling her suddenly with bright blue eyes. "Couldn't you work?"

"I was a secretary before we were married, but I haven't worked in more than ten years," Ellen Farber said with tightly controlled anger. "I couldn't earn that much money myself. Randolph was making fifty thousand a year."

"Now he's dead, and I find that there's hardly anything in his bank account, what he did with his stocks I don't know,

and I wasn't able to raise much when I sold the furniture in his apartment and the equipment from his office. He didn't even leave me with any insurance. That other woman..."

"What other woman?"

"Catherine West. The one he was living with. He met her after we came back from India, where Randolph worked for a year on a government assignment. She was a nurse at the hospital where he handled his cases. I didn't even know what was going on until one day when he demanded a divorce. When I refused, he walked out on me."

"I still don't understand what you want from me." Riordan said.

"I want you to find out whether he took out life insurance with her as beneficiary after he dropped the other insurance."

"You mean he had life insurance which made you the beneficiary and dropped the policy?"

"That's exactly it. You ought to be able to find out whether she got anything from him."

She reminded Riordan of an English teacher he had had in the eighth grade whom he had disliked with a passion. "Oh, you think so, do you?" he said. "Well, this isn't exactly in my line."

"Why not?" Ellen Farber said, raising her thin eyebrows. "If you do investigations..."

"When was your husband run over by that car?"

She named the date. "It was a Saturday night," she added.

"Yeah, there are always a lot of drunks running around on Saturday night," Riordan told her. "I'm not sure how much I can find out, but I'll give it a try if you want me to. I figure it's a day's work. A hundred dollars, plus expenses. The hundred in advance."

He did not like the woman. He was more interested in finding out who had been at the wheel of the car, but he did not tell her that.

She opened her purse and took out several bills, looking at each of them carefully before handing over the money. "When will you have some information for me? I'm staying at the Hilton on the beach and you can reach me there."

"Maybe I'll call you tonight."

She nodded in her unsmiling way, gave him another cool, appraising, none-too-friendly glance, then walked away. He watched her climb back on the pier and walk across the street to a red Nova, which he recognized immediately as a rental car.

He waited until she had driven away, then jumped up

on the pier, and walked under a line of palms to the next corner, to a block of stores facing the main avenue along the beach. He unlocked the door of his office, not bothering to remove the *Out to Lunch* sign, and sat on top of the desk while he dialed a number.

"Hey, Morris, how are you?" he said into the telephone as he heard a familiar voice. The other man worked for the largest insurance company in that area. "I'd like a favor from you, boy. Could you check and see if you had a policy on a guy who died a few weeks back?"

He gave Morris the name Dr. Randolph Farber and the date and circumstances of the doctor's death. "And listen, Morrie—if you don't have anything on him, check around with the competition and see if they know anything, okay?"

Riordan began dialing again as soon as he broke the connection. This time he got the Chief of Detectives at police headquarters downtown, a man named Maxwell. He had become acquainted with Maxwell at least twenty years earlier in connection with an extradition case and felt comfortable with him.

"What's on your mind? I'm kinda busy, Mike," Maxwell said.

"I won't keep you long,

George. Do you know a woman named Ellen Farber?"

Maxwell let out a string of oaths. "You bet. I sent her to you to get her off my back."

"That's what I thought. Have you talked to anyone in Tampa about the case?"

"Nah," Maxwell said. "She didn't seem to be interested in who run over her husband anyway. She wanted us to find out what happened to his insurance. I told her nothin' doin'. No way."

"I know," Riordan said. "George, who should I talk to in Tampa to find out about the case?"

"Lemme think," Maxwell's voice trailed off. Then it became strong again. "There's a detective named Walker—"

"Thanks, pal," Riordan said. "I'll remember you."

"You do that," Maxwell said as he hung up.

The call to Tampa was long-distance and Riordan had more trouble getting a connection. Once he reached the police department he was switched to various extensions before he found his man. Riordan identified himself and explained his business. Walker wheezed when he talked. He sounded like a very large fat man.

"I can't tell you much," Walker said. "There are no clues. We checked the repair



shops but couldn't find any damage that might have been caused in that kind of accident."

"Where did it happen?"

"Downtown. Corner of Franklin Avenue and Laurel Street. You know, Skid Row."

"Did you say Skid Row?" Riordan said, not trusting his hearing.

"That's right."

"Well, that's funny."

"What's funny?"

"What's a doctor like Randolph Farber doing down on Skid Row?"

Walker wheezed a little more, then said, "You got me. It is sort of funny. But who knows? You get guys like that now and then. They like to go where the low life is."

"How did Farber get over there from St. Petersburg?"

"How am I supposed to know?"

"Well, he didn't walk," Riordan said. "Did you locate his car around there?"

"No, I don't even know if the guy had a car."

Some cop, Riordan thought. "What hospital did they take him to after the accident?"

"Bay Shore Hospital. But you won't learn anything there. All they can tell you is what condition they found him in when the ambulance arrived. So what?"

"Yeah, I get you. Thanks anyway," Riordan said, hanging up.

He stood in his trunks next to the desk and thought a moment. He was about to make still another phone call but changed his mind. He went into the back of the store behind a partition and changed quickly into a sports shirt, a very loud pink, and green checked slacks. He put on some white loafers which were on the dirty side and took a few more seconds to wipe the dirt away with an old rag.

Locking the store door behind him, he got into a yellow Mustang parked at the curb. Within minutes he was parking the car on the ramp outside the Hilton Hotel, which had a circular revolving rooftop restaurant. The desk clerk checked Mrs.

Barber's box for messages but found nothing, and after failing to get any answer when he telephoned her room he suggested that she might be on the beach. This proved to be a good guess, for Riordan spotted the woman at once on the broad strip of silver sand behind the hotel.

ELLEN FARBER WAS sunning herself at full length on a towel spread over the sand. She had on a two-piece turquoise bikini which revealed just about all there was of her body, and Riordan decided that her figure was attractive enough for a small woman. But when she looked up and saw him, her face remained as closed and unsmiling as he remembered it from her visit.

"I hope you don't mind my coming by to see you," he said.

"Do you have some information for me already?"

"Not yet. I just want to ask you a question or two."

"What?" she said, the line of her mouth becoming harder as if she anticipated a question she would not like.

"Did your husband have a car?"

"Of course. It was a seventy-four white Continental Mark Four with all-white interior."

"Do you know what happened to it?"

"Yes," Ellen Farber said without hesitation. "I sold it the other day."

"Where did you find the car?"

She raised her thin blonde eyebrows. "In the garage of the apartment house where he lived."

Riordan was unable to conceal his surprise. "Does that mean the car has been in the garage the whole time? I mean, when he was run over and since?"

"I suppose so, Mr. Riordan. Of course, that West woman probably drove it, too. I couldn't tell you for sure, but as far as I know the car has been sitting in the garage."

"Did you find any damage to the car?"

Ellen Farber shook her head emphatically.

"What about stains inside?"

"Stains?"

"Like bloodstains?"

"Oh, come now, Mr. Riordan?" She gave him a look that was almost a grin. "Have you finished with your question or two?"

"I'm just about finished," he said. "Mrs. Farber, can you think of any reason why your husband would have gone over to Skid Row in Tampa?"

"Skid Row? Is that where it happened? No, I can't think of any reason."

"Had he ever gone over there

in the past, so far as you know?"

"No, not as far as I know."

"Well, I won't bother you any more," Riordan said, beginning to move off. "I'll give you a call tonight or tomorrow morning."

"Fine," she said, closing her eyes and relaxing again.

"Oh yeah, one more thing. Do you have any idea where Catherine West is living?"

Mrs. Farber remained silent so long that he began to think she had not heard the question. "Yes, by chance I do know," she said with sudden passion. "She moved out of the apartment where she lived with Randolph the day after the accident. She rented a furnished apartment in a place called the Chester on Central Avenue."

"Thanks," he said and hurried off across the sand, unwilling to spend another second in Ellen Farber's presence.

The Chester turned out to be a two-story white frame building with an outside stairway on the side of the house leading up to the second story. A woman with brilliant dyed red hair, an overflowing bosom and a seat which threatened to break out of her pastel pink shorts looked up at Riordan from the flower bed she was weeding.

"I'm looking for Miss West. Miss Catherine West."

The woman looked sour, con-

vincing him that she must be the landlady. She jerked a thumb over her shoulder in the direction of the stairway to the second story. "She lives upstairs."

Since Catherine West was a nurse, Riordan knew that her hours were likely to be erratic. He stood on the tiny platform at the top of the stairs and rang the bell several times. He could hear the bell sounding inside the apartment, but no one seemed to be at home. He looked across at a window where there were several plants on the inside sill, all African violets, full of purple blooms. He was turning away when the apartment door opened a crack and he caught a glimpse of a young woman clutching a blue terry cloth bathrobe to her throat.

"Miss West? May I come in?"

"Who are you?" she said with a faint note of fear in her voice.

"You wouldn't know me, Miss West. My name is Michael Riordan. I'm an investigator."

"Oh?" She opened the door a crack wider. "What do you want with me?"

"Look, here's my I.D. Can't we talk inside?"

"I guess it's all right."

After a short interval, Catherine West opened the door wide and allowed Riordan to enter. The apartment was in

semi-darkness and he had to accustom his eyes to the reduced light. He followed the woman through a small hallway into a living room in which only the darkness was kind to the ugly, uninspiring furniture, hard used by countless previous tenants. The walls were a horrible ocher tint and desperately needed repainting.

She led the way to a sofa with wooden arms and gray and white striped upholstery, inviting him to sit down beside her. The springs sagged under Riordan's weight. "Nice place you got here," he said.

Catherine West did not appear deceived by his words. She was a slim woman, with brown eyes so large they seemed to monopolize her oval face and short black hair cut in a boyish bob which on closer examination revealed flecks of white. Even in the long terry cloth robe her legs looked like those of a showgirl, long and shapely and sexy in some way Riordan could not define.

"What can I do for you, Mr. Riordan? What are you investigating?"

"You knew Dr. Randolph Farber, I'm told."

She seemed frightened, the way a deer takes fright at the unexpected snap of a twig. Riordan had a desire to protect her, and it occurred to him that

he was not the first man to have that feeling. Probably there had been many men in Catherine West's life who wanted to protect her.

She brushed a hand over her eyes which, as he could see once his vision had become accustomed to the gloom, were noticeably red. "Yes, Dr. Farber was my fiance."

"Did you live together?" Riordan said in a conversational tone.

Now pink flooded her face. "I suppose you know that," she said, nodding. She glanced over at a picture in a silver frame which stood on a table next to the couch. "He was the only man I ever loved."

The statement sounded a little too maudlin for Riordan's taste. He followed her gaze to the picture, which was a full-face colored photograph of a young man with dark brown curly hair, eyes that were almost black, and a sensitive mouth, his complexion very smooth and rosy.

"Is that Dr. Farber?"

"Yes. It was the last picture he had taken and the only one I've got."

"Catherine, I'm trying to clear up a few things about this case that puzzle me. Are you willing to help me?"

"What do you want to know?"

"Well, you probably know

more about Dr. Farber's movements on the day he died than anybody else. Do you have any idea why he went to Tampa that day?"

"Of course. A doctor who had been a classmate of his was passing through Tampa and they arranged to have dinner together that evening."

"Oh? How did he get to Tampa?"

"I drove him over in the Continental. I let him out at the Sheraton, where his friend was staying. He told me he wouldn't need the car because his friend had offered to drive him back. I was on night duty at the hospital, so I drove there and parked until the next morning, when I went home—" Her face grew pink again. "I mean to his apartment—and parked the car in the garage."

"And it wasn't until that morning that you heard about the accident?"

"Yes. A man from the police department came to the apartment and told me about it."

Riordan was silent for a moment. "Catherine, do you know the name of Dr. Farber's friend?"

She shook her head emphatically. "He never mentioned it."

"Do you happen to know where the other doctor came from?"

"No. It might have been New

Orleans. I'm really not sure."

Riordan nodded. "Let me ask something else—did Dr. Farber have any enemies?"

"Enemies?" Catherine West looked startled. "No, none. Unless—"

"Unless what?"

"I shouldn't say this. Unless his wife—she was very upset about the divorce—but what difference would that make? You don't mean..."

"Don't you think there's something peculiar about his death? What was he doing on Skid Row?"

"He might have been just walking somewhere. Randy liked to walk."

"What about the friend who was supposed to drive him home?" Riordan said bluntly.

"I don't know. Maybe he couldn't—"

"Maybe Dr. Farber didn't tell you the truth about who he was meeting?"

"No," she said. "He wouldn't lie to me."

"Okay," Riordan said. "You've been good about answering all my questions—even stupid ones. May I take this picture with me?"

He stood up, picking up the photograph in the silver frame at the same time. Catherine West hesitated.

"I know it's the only one you've got," Riordan said with a

pleasant smile, "but I promise faithfully to return it."

"Well, all right," she said, giving him a wan smile. "Just so I get it back." She looked very depressed as he was leaving and he could not help feeling sorry for her.

Riordan's next destination was Bay Shore Hospital. He took I-275 and headed over the long causeway across the bay toward Tampa. The hospital, a sprawling complex of modern white four and five story buildings, was situated on a point of land extending into the bay. As he drove to it he reflected upon the kind of planning that could place a hospital right under the most frequently used approach path of commercial airliners to the big airport.

It was beginning to get dark when he parked his car near the Emergency entrance of the hospital and walked with long strides across the parking lot. An ambulance was parked at the entrance and an old man with a massive gray head and still grayer complexion was being brought in through large double doors.

Heart attack, Riordan thought.

He managed to find the office without help and asked a young receptionist who had the colorless hair and translucent skin of an albino if she could give

him the name of the doctor who had answered the call when Randolph Farber was run over.

The girl flipped through some cards and said promptly, "Oh, that was Dr. Menon. He's just come on duty. Ask for him in Emergency."

RIORDAN WENT BACK to the double doors, where a young blond woman with a bloody head swathed in bandages was just being wheeled in. She appeared to be unconscious. He looked around for a doctor but at first failed to find anyone. Then he caught sight of a medium-sized man with a turban and a thick black beard who had on a white coat.

He walked up to the man and said, "Dr. Menon?"

The man's brown face did not change expression. He eyed Riordan for a few seconds, then gave him a curt nod. "Yes, I'm Dr. Menon."

Riordan inspected him curiously. "Are you an Indian?"

"Not an American Indian," the man said with a sardonic smile. "My name is Ram Menon and I come from Bombay. My friends call me Ralph."

"Well, Ralph, do you remember a hit-run case on Skid Row a month ago?"

"I vaguely recall such a case. Why do you ask, Mr—"

"Riordan, Mike Riordan. I'm

an investigator. I'm looking into an insurance angle on this accident. The victim's name was Randolph Farber and he was also a doctor. I understand he died before he reached the hospital."

Menon looked blank. "I don't remember the name."

"Here's his picture." Riordan held up the photograph he had obtained from Catherine West. "Does that jog your memory?"

"Yes, I think I remember him. At least he looks like the man."

"What kind of injuries did he have?"

"You'd have to check my report. If I'm not mistaken, there were multiple injuries. A fractured skull, broken legs and massive internal bleeding. He died in the ambulance before we could do much to help him."

"Dr. Menon, had the man been drinking?" When Menon shook his head, Riordan went on, "Do you know anything about the car that hit him?"

"That's not my business," Menon said abruptly. "Now if you'll excuse me, I'm very busy, Mr. Riordan—"

Menon turned away, but Riordan caught his arm. "I won't take more than a minute of your time. Did anyone say what kind of a car hit Farber?"

"Somebody thought it was a yellow Mustang."

"I drive a yellow Mustang."

"Then perhaps you know more about the accident than I do."

Menon gave him an ironic glance and turned away, and this time Riordan made no effort to stop him.

He was thoughtful on the way home and only roused himself from his thoughts when he turned into the driveway and heard the telephone ringing inside his little house. He went in through the side entrance and picked up the phone in the hallway. The caller turned out to be his friend in the insurance company.

"So you're sure Farber didn't take a life insurance or accident policy with your company? How about other companies?"

Assured that no company in the area had insured Farber, Riordan thanked his friend and hung up. He went into the living room, got a bottle of Scotch and went out into the kitchen, where he drank a glass of milk with about an ounce of Scotch added to it. He returned to the living room and sat there a while, thinking.

Then he picked up the telephone and called the Hilton, only to learn that Mrs. Farber had gone out. He dictated a brief message to the effect that Dr. Farber had not taken out any insurance with Catherine

West as beneficiary and asked the clerk to place the message in Mrs. Farber's box.

When that was done, he lay back on the couch and soon stretched out to his full length, sound asleep.

It was first light when he woke up and began to try to recover the thread of his thoughts of the previous day. He still had no idea of how or why Randolph Farber might have been murdered. He left the house to see the pink glow on the eastern horizon before the sun rose, with the promise of the heat of the day ahead.

He laid the photograph of Randolph Farber on the front seat of the Mustang and drove across town toward the Chester apartments. He pulled the car into the parking area behind the white frame house and got out to find himself face-to-face with Catherine West, who was getting out of a VW in the next parking space.

She was wearing her white nurse's cap and uniform and greeted him, saying, "I'm just coming home. I've been on night duty again."

"I thought I'd come by and return the picture I borrowed," Riordan said.

"That's nice of you," she said, and they walked side by side to the house and mounted the outside stairs to her apartment

door. "Won't you come in and have a cup of coffee? It won't take a moment."

"No, thanks." He handed her the photograph in the silver frame, feeling awkward as he did so. "I have to run along."

"Did you find out what you were after?" she said with a quick glance.

He nodded. "Yes, I think I did." There was a brief silence, then he went on, "Look, I wish you lots of luck. Everything will come out all right."

"Thank you," she said in a small voice, offering him her hand.

He took her hand in both his large ones and repeated: "Good luck."

Then he turned and went down the steps. He looked back once to see her letting herself into the apartment. The door closed behind her, and he followed the walk around the front of the house, intending to enter the parking lot by the driveway.

The landlady, whose dyed red hair looked frowsy from the night's sleep, sat on the top step of the front porch, fanning herself with a section of the morning newspaper. "Good morning," she said, turning a suspicious gaze on him. "Are you just coming or going?"

Riordan ignored the implication. "I guess you see all the

visitors that Miss West has."

She shrugged her bare wrinkled shoulders. "I have eyes, don't I?"

"Well, she lost her fiancé recently. I don't suppose she has many people visiting her."

"Hmpf," the landlady snorted. "She's not in mourning exactly, if that's what you mean."

Riordan fixed her with his cold and piercing blue stare the cop's look when he had a prisoner or suspect to interrogate. "Just what do you mean?"

She fussed a little with some heavy gold bracelet she was wearing. Then she said, "Just that she couldn't have mourned her fiancé too much."

"Why not?"

"Because I overheard something she said one day. It seems she's planning to get married soon."

"Who's the lucky man?" Riordan tried to keep surprise out of his voice.

"I wouldn't know how lucky he is. It might be the one with the beard who visits her sometimes."

"Man with a beard?"

"Yes, a foreigner. Wears something on his head." The landlady made with circular gestures.

"He wears a turban?"

"I guess that's what you call it. He's one of those dark-skinned people."

"An Indian—an Indian Indian?"
"I guess so."

"Thanks," Riordan said, turning away.

"Hey, what about some cash for the information?"

Riordan ignored the woman and walked around the corner of the house toward his car. A half hour later he turned his car into the parking lot of the Bay Shore Hospital. He retraced almost the same route to the Emergency entrance, hurrying in through the double doors. He was in luck, for he met Dr. Menon as the latter was giving some final instructions to a nurse.

Menon gave him a dark look.
"Oh, it's you again."

"Yes, I was hoping I could see you before you left." Riordan said. "You're off duty now? Let's go somewhere and talk, maybe get a cup of coffee."

"Well, I can't take you to our cafeteria. That's only for the staff."

"There's a motel across the road. Let's look up the coffee shop there."

Menon shrugged. "I've already given you all the information I have."

But he went with Riordan and got into the Mustang next to the other man, and they drove over the highway to the motel. The coffee shop was nearly empty. Riordan selected

a table in the corner and they sat down. When the waitress approached, Riordan waved away the menus and ordered coffee.

"Look, I'm an old cop," he said, his strong jaw jutting out aggressively at Menon. "When I first heard about this so-called hit-run accident, I got a feeling about it. I got the feeling that Farber hadn't met with an accident at all—that he'd been murdered."

Menon's black eyes avoided Riordan's glance. He stirred in his cup. "Is that what you think now? Are you trying to pin it on me?"

"Dr. Menon, how long have you been in this country?"

"Two years. I came here from Bombay because I heard that you had a shortage of doctors in this country."

"Uh-huh," Riordan said softly. "So tell me this—did you know Dr. Randolph Farber?"

"Did I know him?"

"That's right. Did you know him personally?"

"I heard of him."

"You heard of him," Riordan repeated. "Now I'm a betting man. Would you take my bet that on your application for a medical post here you gave Dr. Randolph Farber as a reference?"

There was a long silence. Then Menon said, "What if I

did? That's no crime under the laws of this country."

"Ordinarily it wouldn't be." Riordan gave him a long glance, then said. "You also are well acquainted with Miss Chaterine West."

"I don't know her at all."

"Oh yes, you do. In fact, you're going to marry her. Isn't that true?"

Menon did not answer.

"So it can be shown that, when you answered the call for the accident and treated the injured man in that ambulance, you actually knew Catherine West. You were also having a love affair with Miss West. With Farber out of the way, you were planning to marry her."

Menon shook his head but did not speak.

"In my book, that adds up to a lot of circumstantial evidence," Riordan said. "It might almost convince a jury you were guilty of murder."

Menon glanced sardonically at Riordan. "Are you going to charge me with murdering Farber?"

The two men's eyes locked in a silent duel. Then Riordan shook his head. "No—because you and I know it isn't true."

"Well, in that case, I'm leaving," Menon said, standing up.

"Sit down!" Riordan roared, grabbing Menon's arm and pull-

ing the other man down. "I guess you took me for a fool, too. Sure, I was fooled for a while. But not for long. You didn't kill Farber—*nobody* killed him. Because Farber's not dead. You are Dr. Randolph Farber."

There was another lengthy silence.

"You wanted to get out of your marriage and your wife wouldn't give you a divorce. You figured you'd just have a lot of trouble—and what was worse, wind up paying a lot of alimony. So you used your experience in India to create Dr. Ram Menon. Probably you knew how to go about getting phony papers, taking advantage of the corruption over there.

"Anyway, you set it all up—carried on a correspondence using some friend in Bombay to handle letters at the other end and recommended Menon for a job in this country. You carried on a double life, working as an interne under your disguise of Menon and conducting your practice as Randolph Farber. No doubt you wore a false beard in the beginning"—Riordan reached over and touched Menon's beard—"but this one is real except that you dyed it black."

Menon smiled a little sourly. "I haven't committed any crime."

"I'm not so sure about that."

So you bided your time while you worked as an interne and went out on ambulance calls. You knew that sooner or later you'd get a chance to have Randolph Farber's identity pinned to some nobody who died along the way. Sure enough, you got a call on Skid Row.

"The guy was dying, and you either removed what little identification he had or found that he had no identification. Then you placed Farber's papers in his pockets. After that you were able to become Dr. Ram Menon full time and proceed with your marriage to Catherine West." Isn't that the way it was?"

"I'm not guilty of any crime," Menon said stubbornly.

"That's where you're wrong. I think there are some statutes that could be applied in this case. Besides, I think the medical association would probably take away your qualification as a doctor on the basis of a violation of ethics."

Menon fell into stunned silence. He lowered his head on his hands, with elbows propped up on the table. Finally he found his voice: "What are you going to do, Mr. Riordan?"

Riordan looked grimly at him. "I'm not a law officer any more. I could be a good citizen and report what I know. But I'm not going to do anything about it. Goodbye—Dr. Menon."

"Thank you," Menon spoke almost inaudibly as the investigator walked out.

Riordan did not look back. Outside the motel he found an orange vending box for newspapers. He dropped in a couple of coins and got a copy of the morning newspaper, then turned quickly to the sports section, which carried the results at Florida Downs. He looked at the sixth race and swore. "How could I miss that one?" The winner's name was Jealous Wife.

**MR. WONG TAKES A HOLIDAY by Dan Ross
FIT FOR FRAMING by Jerry Jacobson
CLEOTA by Ernest Savage**

Of Course, I Killed Him

by DORIS L. GOLDBERG

Some husbands relish a wife who is a big money earner—but not my Frank. When he discovered that my income was greater than his, he did every thing in his power to undermine my achievement.



WHAT DO YOU MEAN: did-I-kill-my - husband - answer - yes - or - no? I'll tell this in my own way or you won't get a word out of me! Let me get the facts in order, and I'll tell you—and don't interrupt.

You see, I have always written for my own amusement, scribbling little stories on envelopes or shopping-lists. But I usually threw them away when I cleaned out my purses. Then,

one day I was reading a magazine—*The Woman's Home Companion*, it was.

Ye gods, what junk!" I thought. *I could do better than that myself.*

So I wrote a story, a mushy love-triangle, and sent it in. And, what do you know? It was accepted right off the bat. It paid well, too.

Frank (that's my husband) was pleased. He bought extra

copies of the magazine, even sending one to his family on the East Coast. He kept a copy in his office (he's an executive in a big firm) and showed it around.

"What do you think of this?" he'd say to anyone who came in. "That's my wife. She wrote this. Myra Norman, that's my wife—Mrs. Frank Norman."

His manner reminded me of something unpleasant—but at first I couldn't quite put my finger on what it was. Then one day it came to me when one of our friends was describing an incident involving her little boy and a remark he had made.

"Wasn't that cute?" she asked. "I thought that was real cute."

Did Frank think my writing was *cute*?

Well, I continued to write—and, if a story didn't get into one magazine, I sent it around to others. Most of my things got published, one way or another.

Frank stopped showing off with me.

There was another thing that changed, too. I used to save up my housekeeping money—what was left over at the end of the month—and buy really fabulous presents for Frank, for birthdays and anniversaries and Christmas. He'd show them to our guests and say, "Look what Myra gave me for my

birthday (or whatever). Of course, she charged it to me, and I'll have to pay the bill, come the first of the month."

My answer had always been a little weak. "You know that's not so, Frank. I paid for it with money I saved."

But he kept right on doing that until once I said, more firmly, "Frank, that's not true. I earned that money by writing—and more besides."

Frank glowered at me, got up abruptly, then mixed another drink for himself.

Something else. My husband had always been generous. He liked to see me well dressed and he never asked the price of anything. And he brought home jewelry, really nice pieces.

And you see how we live—lived—on the outskirts of town, with all the advantages of both city and country. Here's this lovely house, with its informal gardens and its sweeping lawns. Hidden away among the trees at the end of our long curving driveway are the two mail-boxes, one with my name on it because of all my mail. On leaving the house in the morning, Frank used to take the outgoing mail with him to put in the boxes for the mailman.

What has that got to do with it? I'll tell you what—and don't get me off the track again or I'll shut up like a clam.

Where was I? See? You got me all mixed up. Oh, yes, I remember—what I spent for clothes.

But that was the funny thing. Once I was earning the money myself, that changed. Frank seemed to resent my spending, as he had never done when he was the only bread-winner.

"Do you realize how much of this country's economy is devoted to decorating the *women*?" That was his comment every time I got something new, or even every time I looked into a shop-window. He stopped buying jewelry for me. And then he didn't bother about my birthdays or anything. His inborn thrift seemed to have reasserted itself—usually expressed in his inability to discard even a sheet of paper.

Probably the worst time was when we were introduced to a new group at a cocktail party.

"This is Myra Norman, the writer. And this is her husband."

Frank went white and looked as if someone had hit him. He sulked all weekend, barely answering when I spoke.

I got more serious about my writing. Now that I had made something of a name for myself, I began to change my style a little, to write better stuff than

the rubbish I had been turning out. As soon as Frank left the house in the morning, I went to my desk and worked for three or four hours.

Ironically, I had a harder time finding a market for the better stories—until my first book of short stories was published. Then it seemed that my name alone was almost an open sesame and I began getting into the more intellectual magazines.

I never let my work interfere with Frank's comfort. All my papers were put away by early afternoon. When Frank got home, there was a chilled pitcher of martinis waiting for him and we always had an appetizing dinner. I was dressed and ready. If he wanted to go to a movie or somewhere, he had only to say the word.

Then, suddenly, I didn't get answers to my mail, not even rejection-slips. I couldn't understand it. Knowing how Frank felt about my work, I said nothing to him about it. But he saw the incoming mail and seemed to guess. He became loving and sympathetic again. That was a bittersweet time, with my disappointment professionally, but a better feeling in our marriage.

Frank suggested a European trip to celebrate our twenty-fifth anniversary and he gave

me a beautiful diamond bracelet. We were absorbed in the happy work of packing and planning. All the same, in the mornings I worked in a kind of frenzy, writing, polishing, re-polishing, trying to make every word count. But still, nothing.

Then, this morning. Yes, *this morning*. Frank had taken the mail as usual, including three large brown envelopes with manuscripts that I was sending out. Just as his car pulled away from the door, I saw that one brown envelope had fallen to the ground. He did not hear me.

I ran down toward the mail-

box to mail my precious manuscript, cutting across the lawn instead of taking the long way down the curving driveway. When I got to the mail-boxes, there was Frank, with the trunk of his car open.

He was stuffing my manuscripts into the trunk. He was having a hard time, trying to jam them in with the heaps and heaps of all my brown envelopes that were already there.

Of course, I killed him. There was a truck speeding down the hill, and I pushed him under it. It was a mail-truck.

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MAY 1977

Motive, Motive. . .

Haley was a smart cop, but he was new to Homicide and his gung-ho eagerness drove Jackson nearly up the wall. Take the Halvorsen case—Haley had it wrapped up before the department could get going.

by ART CROCKETT

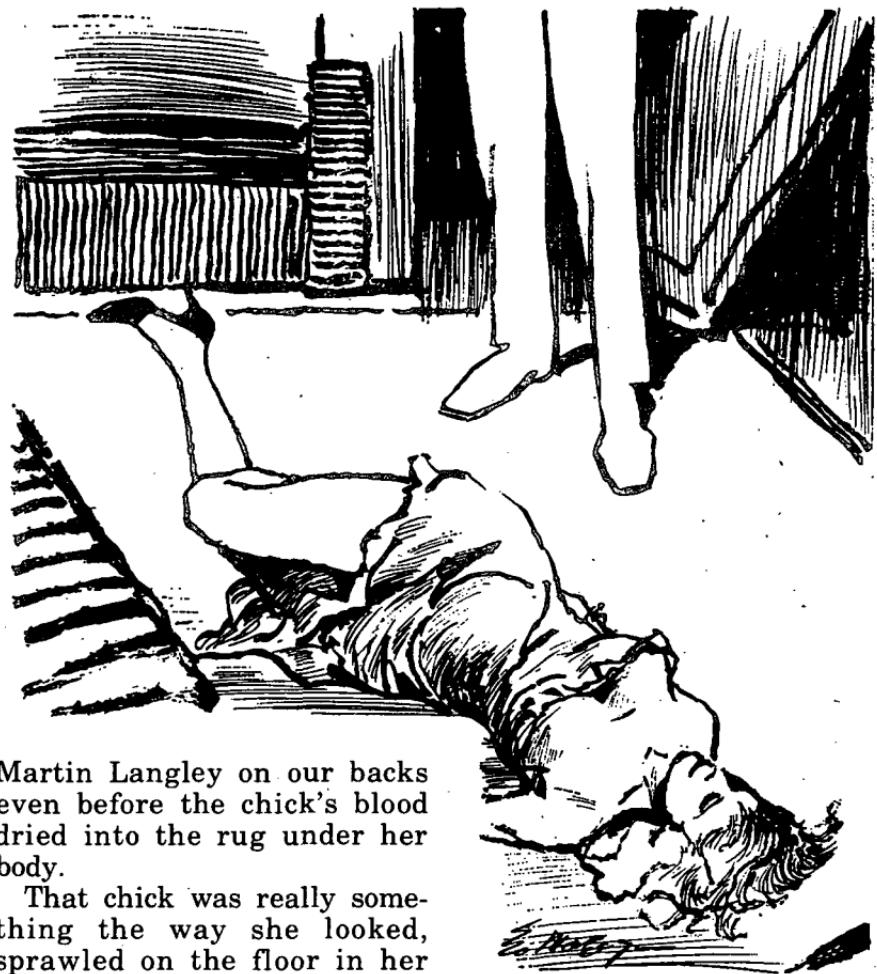
TAKE THE OLD MAN. He was lean and bent and his arms dangled in front of him when he walked and he didn't like you to talk to him because he had to force himself to straighten up to look into your face. It hurt. It must have, the way he winced. Anyway, the idea that someone that old and that bent could commit murder was ridiculous on the face of it.

So everybody on my Homicide team decided that old Herbert Mayescue was innocent.

Everybody, that is, except Tom Haley.

Haley didn't count for much yet, being new on the team. I let him to all the deducing he wanted to do so long as he didn't get in my way.

On this murder case, though, we had no real suspects, no clues and a D.A. screaming for an arrest. Normally, he wouldn't scream for anything. But this was a special case. When the wife of a state senator gets herself knocked off, it's special. And it put D.A.



Martin Langley on our backs even before the chick's blood dried into the rug under her body.

That chick was really something the way she looked, sprawled on the floor in her pink shortie nighty, face up, the knife hilt protruding from her cute little belly.

The weapon was the only thing that marred what should have been a real sexy pose. And, of course, the blood, which there wasn't much of, considering.

Mrs. Sheila Halvorsen—

Senator Robert Halvorsen's bride. He was middle-aged, she was in her early twenties. All the papers ran their wedding pix a few months ago. He looked like the father of the bride rather than the groom.

You can guess what we were up against in this homicide. No

prints on the knife, no prints in the posh hotel suite except the victim's and the senator's. Nobody saw anybody leave the suite. No sounds of a scuffle. The Halvorsens had no enemies other than the political kind.

The only "suspect" was Herbert Mayescue, ninety years old and living off a lifetime of high profits in business. He had the suite next to the Halvorsens.

Mr. Mayescue wasn't exactly seen leaving the murder suite. A bellhop spotted him at the door. The old man had the knob in one hand and a key in the other. The bellhop informed him that he belonged further down the hall. It was a simple error to make, especially for an old geezer like Mayescue.

The bellhop said he stood at the door and watched the aged guest shuffle to his own suite. That was when he heard what he described as "some awful moaning." It sounded so terrible to him that he banged on the Halvorsens' door and asked if anybody needed any help. The moaning got louder but there was no articulate reply. So the bellhop used his passkey to get in—and that was when he spotted the chick on the floor.

That was the picture.

Sheila Halvorsen died before the para-medics could reach her. My team arrived minutes later,

when the guys were hauling their life-sustaining equipment out of the suite. It was homicide now—they had to back off.

Senator Halvorsen was notified at a fund-raising dinner downtown. The department gave him a police escort with sirens screaming.

You should have seen the senator's face when he walked in. Naturally, the body was covered. Our pathologist had removed the knife, which had looked ugly as hell sticking out of that cute belly. So what Halvorsen saw was a lump under a sheet, but it was enough to make him almost pass out.

Morris Tannenbaum and Tom Haley (both First Grade) grabbed him by the arms and urged him to sit.

We couldn't question the guy right away. He was too broken up. What we did do was watch the lab boys take their pix of the murder scene and dust for prints. We didn't expect the senator to tell us anything, anyway, but you never know.

About twenty minutes later, Halvorsen had pulled himself together. So we talked. Like I said, he didn't have anything important to tell us. We were gentle. We always are in a murder case. The senator told us that he had left the suite at about eight p.m. and that his

wife had changed into her nightclothes to go to bed, complaining of a headache.

That was all. I didn't press any issues. But, damn it, Tom Haley did.

He asked, "Do you think your wife had a lover, senator?"

Jee-zuz! What a question to ask of a state senator! I poked Haley on the arm. Aloud, I said, "Pay no attention to him, senator. He's new." Then I shoved the hotshot out of the way and bent low over the grief-stricken man. "We'll see that everything's done to get the guy."

He managed to nod vaguely. "Thanks."

"Your wife will have to be taken to the morgue," I told him. "It's the law. You understand, I'm sure."

He nodded again. "I'll make the funeral arrangements."

I gave him my card. "If you have any questions at all, or you want me to do anything for you, just call me."

The kid-glove treatment. You have to do it, especially when the guy is big time.

I signaled my team to leave and pushed Haley out the door. In the hall I growled, "Damn it, Haley, when are you gonna learn?"

"Well, she could've had a lover," he said. Then Morris Tannenbaum grabbed his arm

and waltzed him to the elevators, explaining the art of interrogation as they went.

I hadn't lied to the senator about Haley. He was new with us. Just made First Grade. He'd amassed a fine record in Safe and Loft and had then asked for a transfer. A final case in which he'd collared six fur heisters had elevated him to First. In the beginning I'd been surprised that Safe and Loft had let him go. Now I was starting to wonder . . .

The same night Sheila Halvorsen was murdered, D.A. Langley put the pressure on. "What've you got?" he barked into my phone. "What about this old guy? Have you checked him out yet? How about prints?"

I got so damn mad at his shotgun approach that I hung up on him.

My audacity startled young Tom Haley. "Gee, lieutenant, do you think that was wise?"

This I didn't need. I slapped the desk. "Look, Haley, I got twenty-five years on the job—ten in Homicide. Anybody wants my shield, he can have it."

Haley flushed. I stood up abruptly and strode around the desk. He followed me with popping eyes.

"I get enough pressure from the outside. I don't need any

from you. Get the hell out of here!"

Then punk kid jumped up. "Yessir!" He scooted out the door. I caught Morris and the other guys on my team trying to stifle their grins. I reached for a cigar. "Lousy hotshot."

It took me a minute or two to calm down. When I did we went over what we had. Which was nothing. The only thing that was obvious to us was that ninety-year-old Mayescue did not stick the lady.

"Look, guys," I said. "I know you want to go home, but we have to wrap this up fast. I'll make it up to you, okay?"

I got grudging nods from everyone and we went back to the posh hotel on East 81st Street. We had to talk to the employees again before they went off duty. I wanted some of them staked out. The investigation had to go into high gear and stay that way until we had an arrest.

Tom Haley didn't come with us. He must have assumed his shift was over and had gone home. I didn't mind. He was too gung-ho for me. Come to think of it, maybe that was why Safe and Loft had let him go.

The hotel manager made a face when he saw us enter the lobby. Cops in a place give it a bad name—any place. The manager was in his middle fif-

ties, plump, bald and pig-faced. He was trained to be polite and was now. "No, sir. I saw nothing unusual. As I said before, there were no strangers here asking about the Halvorsens."

I assigned a couple of my boys to prowl the hotel and talk to the maids. Det. Tannenbaum went into the anteroom where the switchboard was set up and re-questioned the operator.

While I was talking to the manager the bellhop came by the desk, the one who had discovered the body. He was a tall, husky, good-looking kid with a shock of wavy brown hair and a ready smile, the kind of smile that must have produced a lot of tips for him.

HE KEPT WALKING until I said, "Hey, kid, can we talk a minute?"

"Sure." He gave me the big grin, just as though I were a guest.

"Could you repeat what you told us earlier? Maybe you'll remember something else this time."

"Oh, sure." He put his hand on his stomach and rolled his eyes. "I'm still shakin' in here. Know what I mean? Man, it was awful!" The personality boy grinned again, reeking charm.

"Yeah, I know."

He repeated his story almost word for word.

"You didn't see anybody else in the hall?"

"Not a soul."

"Nobody maybe getting into an elevator?"

"Nope, just Mr. Mayescue."

"Okay, son." I flipped pages in my notebook. "We got you as Sonny Larkin. You live at 714 West 43rd, right?"

"Right."

"Why do they call you Sonny?"

He flashed a wide grin.

I said, "Never mind."

Morris came back from the switchboard room shaking his head. "No calls came in for the Halvorsens. Operator's sure of it."

"Let's check out Mayescue again." We rode the elevator cab in silence. I planned my next day's operation, part of which was checking the cab companies to see if a hackie delivered anyone to the hotel before eight p.m.

Morris chewed gum, stood with his hands in his pockets. He looked bored. Morris rarely spoke unless spoken to. He was a good cop. The only disturbing habit he had was calling everybody by his last name without the benefit of a Mr. or Mrs. I was never Lt. Jackson to him—just Jackson. The captain of detectives got the same treatment. I'm sure if the police commissioner walked in he'd do



the same. Morris just didn't give a damn.

"Don't know what I'm going to do about Haley," I said.

Morris didn't answer.

"Maybe he'll work out—if I can just calm him down a bit."

I was talking to myself. Not even a grunt from Morris. Haley was my problem, not his. So he didn't respond.

The elevator doors opened.

We walked down the hall to Mayescue's suite. The cop I'd assigned to guard Halvorsen's door was on the job. He gave me a highball.

Morris knocked on Mayescue's door. The old man was in bed. We gave him time to pull himself together. He peeked out. I showed him my I.D. He let us in.

"I apologize for disturbing you, Mr. Mayescue."

He lifted a bony hand. "Catch the killer yet?"

"No. We thought you might have remembered something since we saw you earlier."

He shook his head. "Memory's not so good lately." He had to turn his face sideways to see me, he was that far bent over.

"You didn't hear any noise in the next suite?"

He cackled. "Hearing's no good, either." He sank into a chair and let his arms hang between his legs. "Except when they blast their television sets."

"Did anyone blast a set around eight p.m.?"

"Uh-huh."

"And you can't remember anything other than what you told us?"

"Uh-huh."

"Mr. Mayescue, did you know the Halvorsens?"

The question almost straightened him up. He pointed a gnarled finger at me.

"You know, fella, the name is very familiar, but I'll be darned if I knew where I heard it." He sagged again. He rapped his skull lightly with his knuckles. "It's in here someplace, but I can't remember. That comes with old age, I guess," he cackled.

I looked at his hands again. Bony, weak and they were shaking a little. His wrist was about the size of my thumb. There was no way he could have shoved a blade into Sheila Halvorsen.

Morris slipped one of his cards between two of Mayescue's gnarled fingers. "If you remember anything, Mayescue, give us a call."

"Sure."

We left him sitting in the chair. My team assembled in the lobby and we compared notes. I assigned some of the boys to stakeouts and asked Det. Joe Marti to sit in the lobby for the rest of the night. I sent the rest of them home. And that's where I went.

The next morning, a copy of the autopsy report was on my desk and also a list of the cab companies in town. I had Tom Haley in mind for checking out the hackies, but he wasn't around.

I called in Morris. "Where's Haley?"

Morris shrugged. "I talked to

his old lady. She said he left for work an hour ago."

I growled something vague and handed Morris the list and told him what to do.

Alone now, I read the autopsy report. The pathologist wrote that the blade had punctured Sheila's stomach wall and liver and that there had been excessive internal bleeding. No bruises or lacerations were found on the body, except for the knife wound. No evidence of sexual abuse was found.

The lab boys gave me a report on the weapon. It was a hunting knife, the kind you can buy in any sporting goods store. Seven-inch blade. Long enough to kill. The thinking in the lab was that the killer had worn gloves. A tiny white thread was found on the hilt of the knife.

It was eleven a.m. when Tom Haley rushed into my office, his face red, eyes bulging.

"You're supposed to check in at eight," I growled. "Why the hell didn't you?"

"Lieutenant, listen. I've got something hot."

"Where the hell were you?"

"Please! I've been working. I found a connection between Mayescue and Halvorsen."

Haley pulled slips of paper from two or three pockets and dragged a chair over to my desk. He was so excited that he

kept dropping the papers to the floor. "I was at the library, and City Hall, and looking at microfilm in the newspaper office."

I rested my head in my hands and began my old wheeze again. "We are a team," I droned. "We work together. We are supposed to report to the lieutenant—that's me—when we embark on a new avenue of investigation. We don't work alone." My hands came away from my head like a shot and the breeze they created sent Haley's slips of paper to the floor again. "Who the hell told you to do this?"

"Nobody." Haley gulped. "I thought I'd save time. I know the pressure you're under."

I sank back on my swivel. "All right, what've you got?"

Haley looked at the papers on the floor. "Mayescue moved into his suite a week after the Halvorsens."

I sighed heavily. "Tell me something I don't know."

"Mayescue's son and Senator Halvorsen were in business together thirty years ago. How about that?"

"How'd you find out about that?"

"Back issues of the newspaper. On microfilm. I read the son's obit. He committed suicide. Paper said it was because of business failure."

The kid certainly knew how

to research a case. I rolled a fresh cigar between my lips.
"Go on."

"At the time, the old man said publicly that his son had been murdered. But nobody believed him. Cops had no proof. And Halvorsen wound up with full control of the business. Paper goods. Made a fortune."

I stared hard at the hotshot. If everything he said checked out, we had a motive. I didn't like the way the kid went off on his own, but he sure got results.

The only thing was, I wasn't completely sold. Thirty years is a long time to carry a grudge. Besides, there was the weakness in the old man, and the obvious senility.

I didn't care what anybody said, Herbert Mayescue would have trouble holding a knife, let alone plunge it into someone.

"Look, Haley, this is a nice piece of work. But the next time you get a flash I want you to tell me about it first."

"Yes sir."

"Okay, now what're you gonna do?"

He cleared his throat. "If it's all right with you, I thought I'd keep digging."

"Fine, just give me a progress report at the end of the day." I put a match to my cigar and the smoke made him cough.

"And before you approach anybody connected to this case I want you to clear it with me, understand?"

Haley nodded. He was impatient to get started. "Can I go now?"

"Yeah."

He gathered up the notes I'd knocked to the floor. "I think I'm on the right track, lieutenant, don't you? I mean, if I can pick up some more evidence you might have enough to pull Mayescue in, right?"

"Yeah, kid."

He hurried out. I heaved a sigh of relief. He was out of my hair for awhile and that was good. Morris came in. I gave him an assignment which he accepted with his usual blank expression and said he'd hop right on it.

I grabbed my hat. I didn't want to be in the office when the D.A. called. It was a nice day. I left my car at the curb and strolled uptown to the hotel. After a half hour of window shopping I entered the hotel lobby. Det. Marti came over to me. I asked, "How goes it?"

"Quiet. The employees you wanted tailed are at home now and the stakeouts are outside their buildings."

"Good."

"One more thing, lieutenant. Haley called here."

"What the hell did he want?"

"You. Says he found something important." Marti folded the newspaper he was reading. "Wants you to call him at Headquarters right away."

I was tempted to ignore it. But the kid was so ambitious I didn't have the heart to put his fire out. I called him.

"Guess what, lieutenant. I found a clipping that says old man Mayescue threatened to get even with Halvorsen even if it took a lifetime. In quotes!"

"Good work. Make some Xeroxes of the clipping and add them to your notes."

"Is it all right if I talk to reporters who handled that story? They might have something that didn't appear in the paper."

"After thirty years? I doubt it." That was a discouraging remark. I didn't want him to stop what he was doing. That would put him in my lap again. So I told him that he might find an old reporter who remembered the case.

There was no question in my mind that some day Tom Haley would make a good Homicide cop. But he had to learn how to look for the easy route in an investigation, and then take it.

I told Marti I was going to take a stroll around the neighborhood and that I'd check in again with him before re-

turning to my office. He slumped into a club chair with his newspaper.

THE DAY WAS still beautiful. Office workers enjoyed their noon lunch break by soaking up the sun while they munched sandwiches. I stopped for a dirty-water frank and a Coke. Later I found a sporting goods store two blocks from the hotel. There was no one in the place except a short guy behind the counter. I went in and looked over his display of hunting knives in a glass case.

The owner stood on the other side of the case. I showed him my I.D. "Anybody buy one of these knives recently?"

"Yes sir. Day before yesterday."

"Remember what he looked like?"

"Yep."

I flipped my notebook to a fresh page. "Describe him, please."

It was 2 P.M. when I got back to the hotel lobby. Marti was talking to the day manager, stopped when he saw me. "Everybody's trying to reach you, lieutenant."

"Who's everybody?"

"The DA, Morris . . . and Haley."

Damn! Haley again. I told him to give me a progress report at the end of the day and

he calls me every time he turns up a new piece of evidence.

As far as I was concerned, the only call important enough to return was Morris's, which I did. He gave me the rundown on a rap sheet I'd asked him to dig out. I told him what he had to do next, then hung up.

The phone on the manager's desk rang almost immediately. It could be no one else but Haley. I was right.

"Lieutenant, I fould an old-time reporter and did I learn plenty! Listen to this. Right after the son committed suicide, old man Mayescue told newsmen that he was going to kill someone Halvorsen loved, just like Halvorsen had killed someone Mayescue had loved. It didn't get into the paper because of lack of space. The reporter told me that Mayescue said he was buying a gun. He vowed revenge and he didn't care how long it took!"

The reporter Haley had spoken to must have been old Charlie Grimes. Good old Charlie. He could still size up a situation as fast as hell.

"Great work, Haley!" I put as much enthusiasm into my voice as possible.

Think we can bring him in now?" Haley asked. "The reporter said he'd testify. Don't you think we got enough?"

"Yeah, I'd say so. Look, go

back to the office and wait there."

"Want me to pick up Mayescue?"

"No, no. I'll let somebody else do that. You just stay in the office and put your notes into shape. Type them up nice and neat."

"Okay, okay."

I hung up and dialed the D.A. Punk kid. Wish I had Haley's enthusiasm, though. Langley's secretary came on. I announced myself and she put me through. "Langley, I think we can wrap this case up tonight. If we do, I'll give you a call."

There was an audible exhalation on the phone. "Thank God!" he said.

When I got back to the office, Tom Haley was so busy typing up his notes he didn't see me walk by. Morris called me from the sporting goods store and gave me the good news. The rest of the case was routine. At five p.m. I looked out my window and saw the suspect being helped out of an unmarked car. Two of my boys were guiding him into the building.

Haley punched the final period on his typewriter and rushed into my office with his report. The typing was excellent. Margins perfect. No smudges. "Damn fine job, Haley. This is the way all re-

ports should look. Keep it up."

"What about Mayescue? Who's gonna get him?"

"Everything's taken care of. The suspect's on his way up right now."

The kid was all smiles. His first homicide case. He was puffed up like a rooster. He'd been the only one on the team to suspect Mayescue and now he sat back in a chair to wallow in his glory.

For a minute or two, anyway.

Three men entered my office. Two were detectives. The third was the suspect, Sonny Larkin.

Haley's smile froze.

"Sit down, Sonny," I said.

The tall, good-looking kid sat. His face was pale. The charm was gone. He stared at the handcuffs around his wrists.

Haley sat with his jaw sagging.

I glanced at my boys. "You read him his rights?"

They nodded. To Sonny I said, "Want to talk about it?"

"Nothing to talk about," he said, sullenly. "I'm innocent."

"Day before yesterday you bought a hunting knife. The owner identified you as the buyer. Detective Tannenbaum showed him your mug shots. The owner also identified the knife as the one he'd sold you."

Sonny was beginning to sweat.

"Want to talk?"

No answer. So I kept on.

"You told me you used a passkey to get into the murder apartment. The manager says bellhops at the hotel aren't allowed to have passkeys. Only the maids. How'd you get yours?"

"Found it."

Haley got up. He stared at me like I was crazy to be questioning this guy when he had the case against Mayescue all sewn up. Haley burned to interject something. I glared at him. He retreated.

Sonny was a step or two from breaking down.

I said to him. "We found a thread on the knife. It matches the material used to make the gloves you bellhops wear on the job. Ready to talk?"

Sonny Larkin was shaking.

I pulled his rap sheet and read aloud only the convictions, which numbered three since 1972. All sex offenses. Sonny squirmed.

"I can guess how it happened," I said to him. "Let's say you had the hots for Sheila Halvorsen. Kept seeing her coming in, going out. Then when the senator went to the fund-raising dinner you had your golden opportunity."

"You used your passkey. Sheila got out of bed. She threatened to scream if you didn't leave. You pulled your

knife and told her to strip. She refused. She started to scream so then you rammed the knife in.

"Later you came back. You thought you might have left something behind. That's when you saw Mayescue at the door and you figured maybe he'd take the rap if you said you saw him there."

Sonny blubbered, "I . . . didn't want to . . . hurt her."

"Book him," I said.

Haley was in a daze. After a

while he said, "Everything pointed to Mayescue."

"Just a coincidence that he lived next door."

"But you knew it was the bellhop almost from the start."

"Yeah."

"And you let me go ahead with all that digging."

"It was good practice."

"But the bellhop had no real motive. Not like Mayescue's."

I gave him a patient look.

"He had the oldest motive in the world."



MIKE SHAYNE Presents

Next Month's Headliners

THE VIOLENT ONES by BRETT HALLIDAY

A New Mike Shayne Long Novelet

"WE'RE THROUGH, RICKY—all washed up. Can't you get that into your thick skull?"

There was a hard glint in the green-flecked eyes of Kay Langham.

A fleeting expression of anger, partly mixed with anxiety, shadowed the dark, lean face of Ricky Shaw.

"Look, pet, this can't happen to us. Sleep on it. You'll feel differently tomorrow..."

"Sorry, Ricky." She tossed her proud head, with its mane of carefully styled red hair. "This time I mean it." She pushed him away as he drew closer to her. "Don't start maul-

kiss her goodbye

Ricky had the perfect recipe to win back his wealthy fiancée. If only he hadn't!

by

HERBERT HARRIS



ing me. All that is over and done with."

He searched her face uneasily. Did she mean it? It looked as though she did.

This was a new Kay. He had never seen her look quite so

practical or so frigid. She had always been so gay, so warm, so yielding.

But it was not the loss of Kay as an amorous companion that worried him. She had been a sort of insurance for the

future—the heiress to a fortune, socialite daughter of a man of wealth and influence.

"I get it," he muttered, trying a little self-pity to make her relent. "You've suddenly discovered that I'm a bit below your class. A humble bandleader. You're tired of slumming around the jazz-clubs, so you're chucking Ricky Shaw in favour of something out of Burke's Peerage."

Far from making her relent, this only seemed to make her more contemptuous.

"I please myself whom I choose, in the same way that you do," she said, staring him out.

"How do you mean?" he asked uncertainly.

"Do you imagine I don't know about your intimate friendship with Eve Foster?"

He swallowed. "Eve? She's just a little blonde who sings with my band."

"Rather more than that, surely?" she challenged. "My absence in the South of France must have been a heaven-sent opportunity for you both. No chance of my dropping in suddenly while Eve was visiting your flat."

Oh, hell, he thought, why couldn't people keep their big traps shut? He said: "Okay, sweetheart, I'll come clean. So I fell. But it doesn't mean a

thing. You know I never wanted anyone but you, Kay..."

"Are you sure it was *me*?" she flung at him. "Or were you counting on the nice future of ease and luxury that goes with hooking an heiress?"

He winced suddenly. It was as if she had struck him in the face. For a while he was speechless.

She smiled acidly and said, "The moment of truth?"

He fought his way back to blandness and suavity. "Do you remember what I said to you one night? That night when we...?"

"I don't want to hear any more," she said, turning away from him. "I've told you it's all over and done with. This time I mean it."

"Do you remember what I said that night?" he persisted doggedly. "I said I'd shoot myself if you walked out on me. I meant that, too."

She laughed mirthlessly. "Oh, very melodramatic," she said. "You missed your vocation, Ricky. You should have been an actor, not a bandleader. I almost believed it, too."

"You can believe it now," he told her grimly, hoping to frighten her. "It'll make nice headlines when I kill myself, won't it?"

Kay turned to face him—the haughty, imperturbable little deb, playing with him as a cat plays with a mouse. "Poor Ricky," she said mockingly. "How I must have shattered your hopes. Never mind... there are *other* rich girls."

Leaving the plushy atmosphere of the Langhams' smart town house, Ricky walked up the street, debating whether he should hail a cab.

No. He couldn't run to cabs. Taxis were for the Man-About-Town. He knew he could never be a Man-About-Town unless Kay Langham forgave him.

She had told him she loved him, and she had meant it—he felt sure of that. He had had to put on a big act to kid her that he loved *her*. After all, she was too top-drawer to have Eve Foster's animal warmth.

It was a little too early for the Tropicala Club. Ricky went first to his flat. There was a letter lying on the mat, but he knew before opening it that it was from Pirelli, the club manager.

"Dear Mr. Shaw,—I have to advise you with regret that your contract with the Tropicala will not be renewed..."

Screwing the letter up in his fist, he felt like bursting into tears. There was nothing in view now, nothing at all. Now,

more than ever, he needed the security that marriage to Kay Langham could bring him.

A bitter smile turned up one corner of his mouth. To hell with the Tropicala—and Pirelli.

"I said I'd shoot myself if you walked out on me... It'll make nice headlines when I kill myself, won't it?"

That's what he'd said to her. And she had given him that cool, derisive smile.

But suppose...?

He went into the bedroom and opened one of the drawers of his chest. From under a pile of clothes he took a small revolver.

He stretched himself on the bed, gazing at the gun, knowing already what he meant to do.

Presently he would call Kay's number. She would still act coldly, brushing him off. He would give her a goodbye kiss over the wire—that little osculatory noise he had transmitted before by courtesy of the G.P.O. Then she would hear the shot...

What harm could it do him, anyway? If her heart *was* as warm as he thought it was, she would leave the door open.

Ricky closed his eyes for a moment. He pictured her finding him on the bed, flinging her arms round his neck, sobbing on his chest. And then it would be all right. He'd confess that

he had done it in desperation. trick, tell her that he had done it in sheer desperation.

Presently he climbed back on the bed, remembering to get the little cylinder of lipstick from the dressing-table drawer—the lipstick which Eve had rather carelessly left behind. He rubbed the bright lipstick on his temple, making a red patch there.

He dialled Kay's number, and presently was speaking to a servant. "This is Mark Elsom," Ricky lied. "I want to speak to Miss Langham."

That should fetch her. Mark Elsom was a peer's son. He had pursued Kay relentlessly.

"Hello... Mark?" It was Kay's voice.

"No... it's Ricky. Listen..." "I won't." She sounded pettish. "I've told you we're through, Ricky, and I honestly mean it..."

"Okay," he said. "I told you what Id do, didn't I? This is my goodbye kiss, Kay—and I do mean goodbye..."

He made the kissing sound into the mouthpiece, and then fired the gun. There was a short gasp at the other end of the line. "Ricky! Ricky!"—her voice came ringing over the line, but he didn't answer. Smiling, he put the phone back in its cradle.

The whisky was having a

mellowing effect on him now.

He couldn't have said how long it was before he dropped off to sleep. Nor could he have said how long it was before the hand was laid on his shoulder to shake him into consciousness.

Eve Foster stood by the bed. ridiculous, and said: "Oh..."

"You must have been drunk," Eve told him querulously. "Do you suppose your silly little joke could have fooled anyone—least of all your precious Kay Langham?"

"Why don't you mind your own dam' business?" he snapped.

"I've brought you a message," Eve said. "Your precious Kay turned up at the Topicala a little while back. She told me: 'Tell Ricky Shaw that a man who blows his brains out doesn't replace the telephone receiver after he's done it.'"

"Thanks," Ricky said.

In an expressionless voice, Eve said: "There's a message from Pirelli, too. He said you've no need to work out your contract at the Topicala—he doesn't like employing no-good tramps. I quote him. In fact, I agree with him."

A small wave of heady perfume hit his nostrils as she turned abruptly and left the room.

A few minutes later there was another shot.

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